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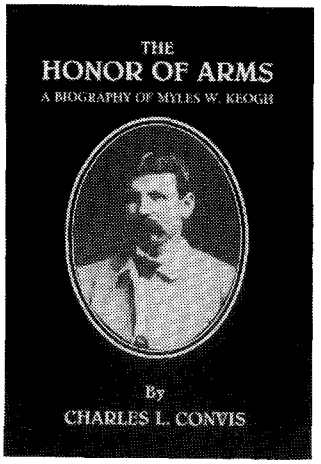

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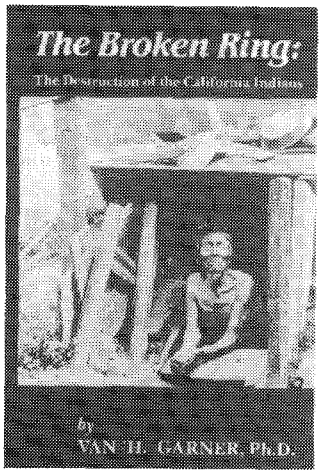

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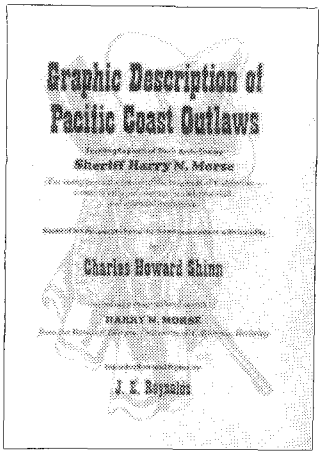

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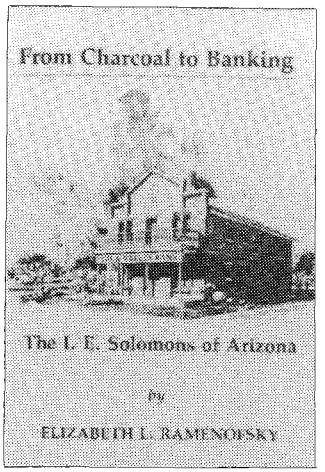

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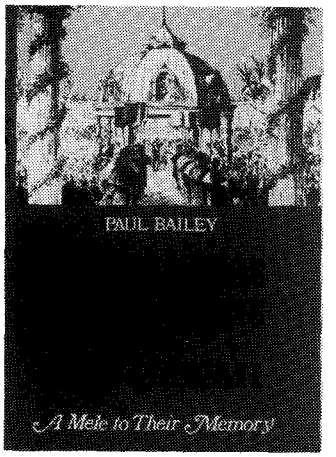

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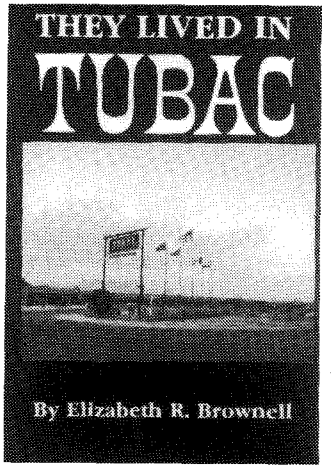

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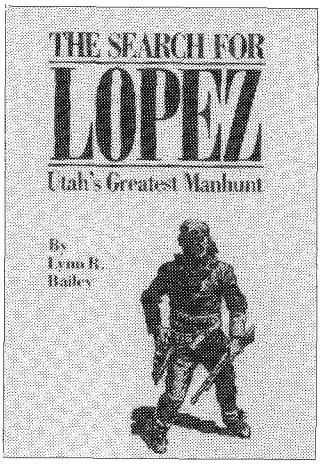

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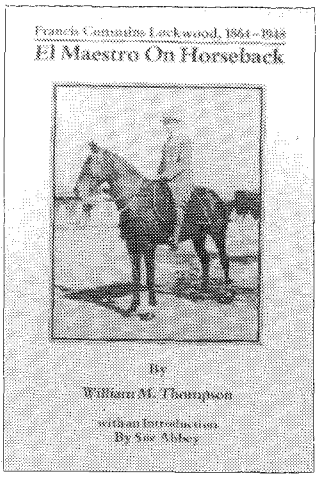

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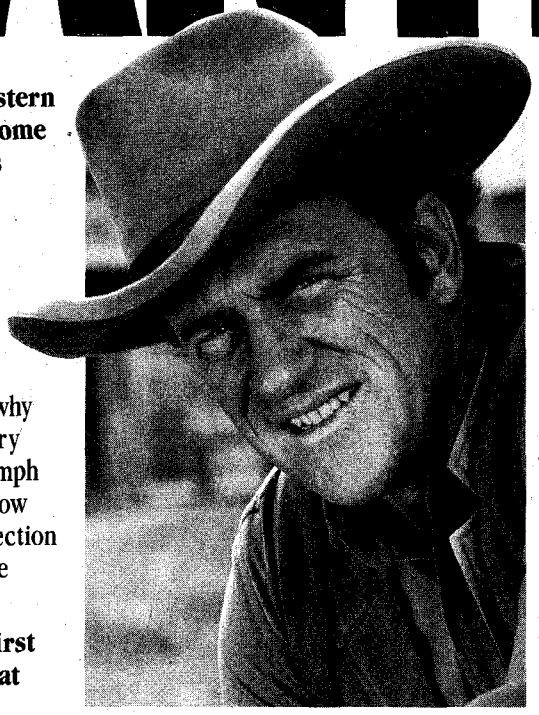

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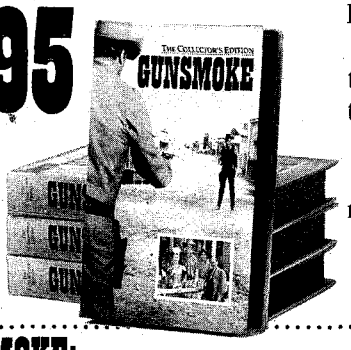

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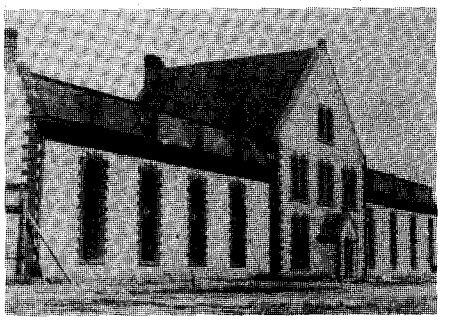

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Our Cover

E. Lisle Reedstrom's photo of cowboy gear and Younger memorabilia in his collection of western Americana.

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From the Editor

Howdy, folks!

In this month's literary marvel, I intend to tell you about a feller named Steve Jones from Oklahoma. Now, if you've heard about the Steve Jones from Oklahoma who ran for United States senator in the general election last November, don't get riled thinking I've taken up political writing—I wouldn't sully my hands on such. The Steve Jones from Oklahoma that I want to tell you about is the one who for the past few months has been hanging around at TRUE WEST under the distinguished title of "editorial intern."

About the best way I can explain what an editorial intern does is to say that if I were trail boss Gil Favor, Steve Jones from Oklahoma would be ramrod Rowdy Yates—except I don't look much like Eric Fleming, that tough hombre who played Gil Favor, and Steve Jones doesn't look much like Clint Eastwood. Beyond that, near as I can figure out, an editorial intern is someone who rolls up his sleeves and pitches in, working hard in exchange for my pearls of wisdom, paltry wages, and having his tuition paid as a graduate student in history at Oklahoma State University here in Stillwater.

At first glance, there's not a whole lot to recommend Steve. For one thing, he's younger than me, and I cain't abide anybody being younger than me. For another, he can grow a full beard. In fact, he not only can grow one but he actually has the audacity to wear it to work every day, constantly reminding me that I don't have enough whiskers to tickle a baby's cheek.

There's worse. He is a hat collector whose collection does not include even a single gimme cap. He has stove pipe hats, derbies, fedoras, and even a fire fighter's helmet, which he used to scare the beejeezus out of my daughter on Halloween night. But no gimme caps. That's not all. He is a model of sobriety because he can't stand the taste of alcohol. Most embarrassing, though, is that he hasn't been able to stomach red meat since last July, when he collided with what must have been an exceptionally low-down, good-for-nothing hamburger. You can only imagine how humiliating it is for the rest of us at this here cowboy mag to associate with a feller who don't eat beef.

Besides all those personal drawbacks, Steve Jones from Oklahoma has it in his head that he wants to get a doctorate in history—not in western history, mind you, but in the Civil War.

By now you're probably asking yourself, "What earthly good could a feller be to TRUE WEST if he doesn't own a gimme cap, doesn't drink an occasional beer, doesn't eat red meat, and actually entertains notions of becoming a PhD?"

Well, for all that, Steve has his redeeming qualities. He was raised and lived most of his life in the town of Woodward, Oklahoma, which is west of the hundredth meridian and, therefore, makes him by almost any definition a born and bred Westerner. Before he got it in his head to get a college education, he worked for a number of years as a reporter and photographer at local newspapers in Woodward. That was during the energy boom of the late 1970s and early '80s. Woodward happened to be a rip-roarin' oil town at the time, so Steve got some firsthand experience writing about the Wild West of the late twentieth century. And he also learned something about writing for real people.

The level-headedness that Steve gained as a son of the West and as a working journalist carries over into his goals as a historian. Like you folks and like me, he thinks a good historical article ought to get to the heart of what really happened in the past and tell the story without a lot of highfalutin' philosophizing. He once confided in me that he would like to become the "Glenn Shirley of Civil War historians." I'm sure you all know from Glenn's many western articles and books that he is one of those rare writers with the ability to weave thoroughly researched facts into well-told true tales.

Steve Jones from Oklahoma is making a good hand for us. I'd like to see him become the Steve Jones of western historians, but if he insists on staying with the War Between the States, becoming the Glenn Shirley of Civil War writers ain't a bad idea. After all, bridging the gap between the university and the newsstand is what TRUE WEST is all about, and the world will always have room for someone who can combine the skills of a trained historical researcher with those of a good storyteller.

John Joerschke

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Better Than Ever

TRUE WEST is one of three magazines that I intend to subscribe to for the rest of my life. The other two are *Smithsonian* and *Natural History*.

I feel I know Joe Small somewhat, because he wrote me several very nice letters and bought a couple of articles for his, unfortunately, short-lived *Wanderlust* magazine. If he is as personable as his letters, and I'll bet he is, then he is one nice feller. Frankly, I was very disappointed when you took over.

Thus, I believe that I come from a certain vantage point as I respond to the letter from Steve Courso, who wants to go back(ward) to the *real* TRUE WEST magazine ("Truly Western," TRUE WEST, October 1990).

I always enjoyed the publication, but I believe it is better now than it ever was. Each issue gets a little better, and I am pleased that you can and are doing this. Your balance of stories is great. Naturally, I don't read them all or like all of those that I read. But month after month it is a joy to pick up TRUE WEST and read about real people.—**Jack Down, 2510 Haslett Road, East Lansing, Michigan 48823.**

Editor's Note: Thanks, pard, for overcoming your disappointment. I don't know as how I'd say I "took over." It was more a matter of having the reins handed to me—leastwise that sounds a touch more gentlemanly.

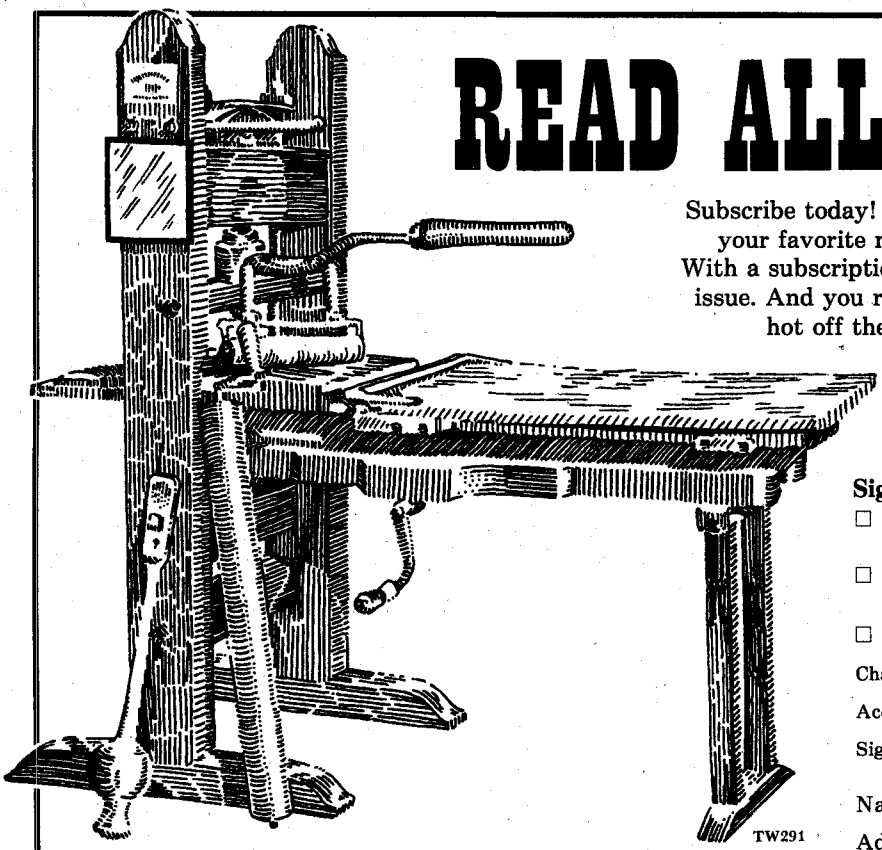
Anyhow, as I've said before, I don't know if it's possible to build a better mag than Joe did, but we sure do our durnedest to build 'em as good.

Black Cowboys

I've been purchasing TRUE WEST and OLD WEST at the newsstand since 1981; I enjoy reading them very much.

What fascinates me most about the West is the topic of black settlers and black cowboys. I collect items related to black cowboys. So little has been written about them that many people, both white and black, have never read or heard about black cowboys. Some 5,000 black cowboys have been lost to history.

When I purchase TRUE WEST or OLD WEST, I always look first for stories about black cowboys. In the past you have published articles about Walter Jackson, Bronco Sam, Henry Flipper, and pioneer George W. Bush.



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Do you plan to publish anything soon on other black cowboys?—**Murphy Darden, 628 Lulu Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007.**

Editor's Note: We don't have any publishing quotas for articles about minorities. We just look for good stories about old-time Westerners, and there are an abundance of them that happen to be about folks of all ethnic backgrounds. Although I don't have any yarns about black cowboys in my files at the moment, I'm sure we'll be publishing others in the future.

History Up For Bid

I have been getting TRUE WEST for about one and one-half years. I really enjoy reading it.

I especially liked "Old West Paper Artifacts at Auction," by William J. Felchner (TRUE WEST, November 1990). The auction houses are so far away from me, though, that I doubt I'll ever get to visit them. I thought that the artifacts would have brought a better price.

I really like reading about the Old West. Keep up the good work.—**Sharon Franks, Rural Route 1, Box 115 R, Niota, Illinois 62358.**

Like Old Times

Thanks for all the nice stories you have been running lately in both TRUE WEST and OLD WEST. It's like old times when all the stories were good. Please keep up the good work and good writing.—**Mrs. John Hernandez, 1503 Corto Drive, Dallas, Texas 75218.**

Editor's Note: Thank you, ma'am, for the kind words. And thanks, too, to the many fine freelance writers who have been providing all that "good writing."

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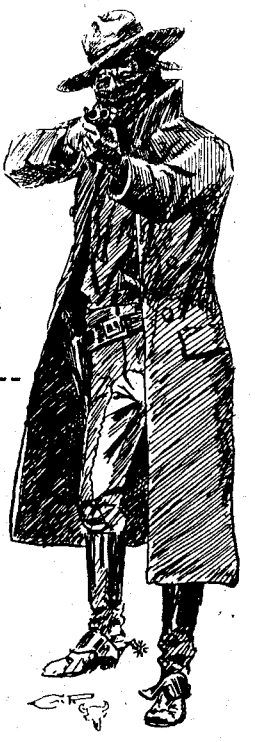

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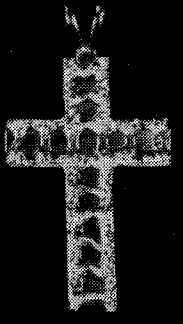

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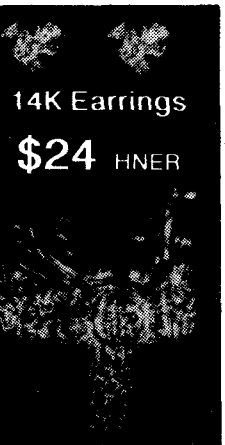

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Fort Vancouver

By JOHN LEGG

Author's Photo

Fort Vancouver's kitchen-dining area (left) and bakery (right).

It sat on the banks of one of the American Northwest's greatest rivers, the Columbia, and through its wooden gates passed much of the area's vast riches. Fort Vancouver was not only regional headquarters for the Hudson's Bay Company but a guardian of British interests in North America as well. Today parts of the rebuilt fort offer visitors a glimpse of Oregon Territory during the peak of the fur-trade era.

Fort Vancouver served to protect English trade and keep Americans at bay in the early nineteenth century when the two nations disputed control of the Northwest. In 1818 the United States and England agreed to a "joint occupancy" of the area. Tacitly implied in the agreement was the idea that sole ownership would go to the nation that developed the area first. Seven years later the British built Fort Vancouver one hundred miles upriver from the mouth of the Columbia to strengthen their claim to the Oregon Region.

The Hudson's Bay Company moved its Columbia Department headquarters from Fort George (located where the Columbia emptied into the Pacific Ocean) into Fort Vancouver. The Columbia Department oversaw trade in an area that included present-day Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and British Columbia. As headquarters for such a vast region Fort Vancouver's warehouses usually bulged with supplies for traders, trappers, Indians, fort residents, and other Hudson's Bay Company forts in the district. The warehouse had to remain well-stocked as it took about two years for goods to arrive from England.

Jobs at the fort were many. In their shops fort workers manufactured what items they could—barrels, traps, candles, lanterns, and tools. Bakers and kitchen helpers prepared meals for fort residents; farmers tended fields and orchards; and men loaded and unloaded ships. There was firewood to chop and transport, account books to keep, and clothing to make or mend.

In 1846 the United States gained sole possession of Oregon Territory and on May 15, 1849, the United States Army established a post at the site of the old fort and named it Columbia Barracks. In July 1853, the army renamed the barracks Fort Vancouver.

The Hudson's Bay Company did not

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completely vacate the post until 1860. Within six years fire and rot destroyed all of the old company buildings. The United States Army changed the name of the post again in 1879, this time to Vancouver Barracks, and did not abandon the site until 1947.

A year later archaeologists began excavations at the fort location. They took over one million artifacts from the ground and, using documentary material, began reconstruction. The fort's rebuilt bastion and five major buildings, all on their original sites, have been open since 1966. The buildings are the Indian trade shop and dispensary (it was Hudson's Bay Company policy to put the fort doctor in charge of the Indian trade room), bakery, kitchen, blacksmith's shop, and factor's house.

The Indian trade room has a representative sampling of fur-trade era goods such as beads, beaver pelts, wool or corduroy pants, *voyageur* lanterns, tobacco, and traps. The building also houses the doctor's quarters, pharmacy, and dispensary, all outfitted as they would have been in the 1830s with bottles of medicine and cots.

The kitchen is representative of 1845, complete with tinware, dishes, cutlery, and cooking pots, a stocked dining area, and a place for trappers and traders to wash. The bakery is fully operational and bakers occasionally make breads and biscuits there.

The most impressive building on the site today, as it was in the fort's heyday, is the chief factor's house. Dr. John McLoughlin, a fierce-looking, bushy-browed businessman and physician, ran the fort from this house. McLoughlin lived quite well despite rough frontier life, and the house, replete with fine furnishings, silverware, and expensive clothes, reflects his lifestyle.

National Park Service rangers and costumed interpreters staff the site and offer information about the fort, the surrounding area, and the fur trade.

The Fort Vancouver National Historic Site is open year-round, seven days a week. It is easily accessible on the Mill Plains Boulevard Exit off Interstate 5 in Vancouver, Washington, directly across the Columbia River from Portland, Oregon.

Western Roundup is a report on places to go and things to see associated with the history of the Old West. Submissions are welcome. Information on scheduled events should be submitted at least four months prior to the event. Items on historic places are also welcome. Send information including photos to: Western Roundup, Western Publications, P.O. Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076.

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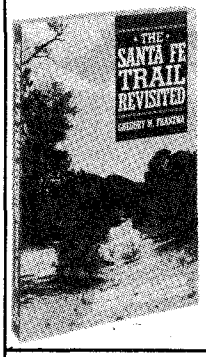

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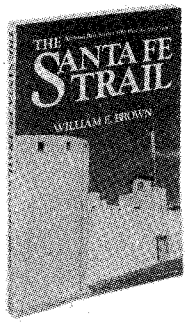

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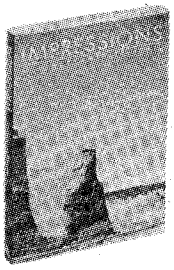

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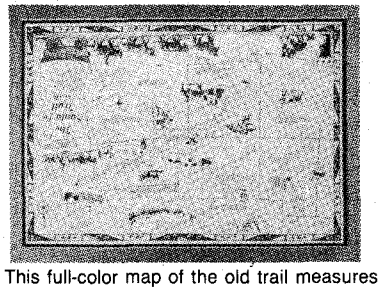

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Custer's Indian Child

By CHUCK PARSONS

George Armstrong Custer.

Legends about Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer abound. William S. Mathers, 7583 South Ogden Way, Littleton, Colorado 80122, wrote to ask about a son Custer allegedly had with Monahseetah. Mr. Mathers has been told that Monahseetah was the daughter of Cheyenne leader Black Kettle, who died when Custer raided their village on the Washita River in Indian Territory, November 27, 1868.

First of all, Monahseetah was a Cheyenne Indian captive; however, she was the daughter of Little Rock, a high-ranking chief in Black Kettle's village. Some have claimed that Custer picked her as his tent-mate and that the next summer she gave birth to a son who was named "Yellow Swallow" or "Yellow Bird." Little hard evidence exists to support the story. Writer Marie Sandoz claimed a boy named "Yellow Swallow" was carried on the Darlington Indian Agency rolls as a student, but the rolls gave no indication of who might have been his father.

Custer's wife, Elizabeth, did not believe the story. Custer had merely reported that one of the Indian women had delivered a baby at about the time when his alleged son was born. Most convincing, Frederick Benteen, a decided Custer-hater who was at the Little Big Horn, wrote that the boy in question was a "simon-pure Cheyenne baby. . . ." Since Benteen himself did not believe the story, one wonders why anyone else would! Lawrence A. Frost has clearly shown the tale to be nothing more than rumor among anti-Custer writers.

Dubious "Rose"

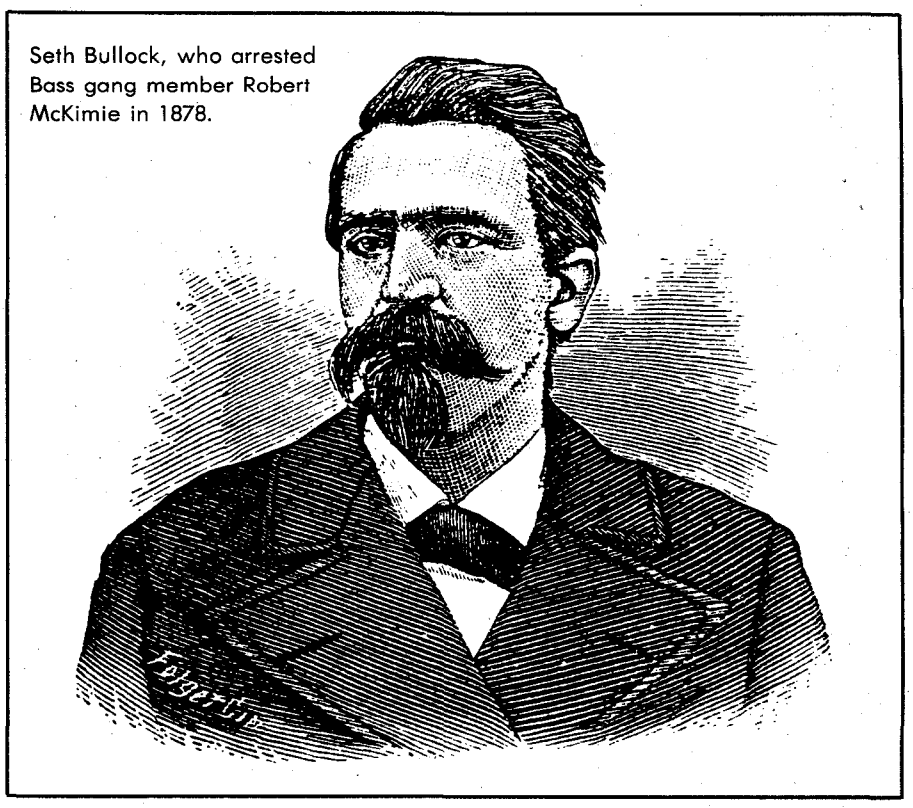
There has been renewed interest in the gunbattle between United States marshals and members of the Bill Doolin gang at Ingalls, Oklahoma Territory, on September 1, 1893. J. Jeff Bagwell, 5821 Norvel Drive, Corpus Christi, Texas 78412, wrote to ask about the "Rose of the Cimarron," supposedly present during the fight.

Legend has it that the "Rose" was gang member "Bitter Creek" Newcomb's sweetheart and helped him during the fight by bringing him ammunition. Unfortunately, the story is just that—a story. Lute P. Stover created it to add an element of romance to the film "The Passing of the Oklahoma Outlaw." Glenn Shirley has thoroughly discredited the "Rose of the Cimarron" tale in his writings and in his most recent book, *Gunfight at Ingalls: Death of an Outlaw Town.*

"Little Reddy"

Robert McKimie was a little-known outlaw associated with the Sam Bass gang. He is the subject of a question from Carl Heinrich, Box 305, Reno, Ohio 45773, who wants to know about McKimie, also known as "Little Reddy," prior to 1877–78 when he robbed stagecoaches in South Dakota's Black Hills.

McKimie, born about 1855 in Ohio, was the illegitimate son of Rose McKimie and Charles Richards. He joined the army at the age of fourteen but was either dismissed or deserted in Kansas. He journeyed to Utah, where he fell in with a group of robbers. Later he became a murderer and was sentenced to fifteen years in a Utah prison.



Seth Bullock, who arrested Bass gang member Robert McKimie in 1878.

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After a year he escaped and made his way to the Black Hills.

After joining the Sam Bass gang, McKimie committed his most notorious act when he killed popular stage driver Johnny Slaughter. McKimie claimed the killing was an accident but gang members ran him out of their group.

For the next few years, McKimie was a wanderer, having been seen in St. Louis, Texas, Philadelphia, and his home state of Ohio. Black Hills lawman Seth Bullock caught up with and arrested McKimie on January 15, 1878, but on February 11, he escaped from jail and continued a life of crime. His last known whereabouts were in a Hillsboro, Ohio, jail where he was awaiting trial. There his trail ends. The fate of McKimie is as much a mystery as the final fates of numerous other western outlaws.

J.W. Bridwell prepared the only serious study of the outlaw, *Life and Adventures of Robert McKimie*, in 1878.

101 Ranch

The old Miller Brothers 101 Ranch was once known world-wide as the ideal ranch of western hospitality. Orval E. Wright, 1234 South Santa Fe, Wichita, Kansas 67211, wrote to say that he used to drive by the ranch and asked about its present location.

Col. George W. Miller founded the ranch in 1881, when he first used the 101 ranch brand. The ranch was on the Salt Fork Creek near Ponca City, Kay County, Oklahoma, about sixty miles northwest of Tulsa. It prospered through the efforts of Miller and his sons, Joseph C., Zack T., and George L., known respectively as "the farmer," "the cowboy," and "the financier."

Due to several calamities, namely the deaths of Joe and George Miller, financial losses between 1925 and 1930, and the Great Depression, the 101 Ranch had to be sold. The final auction, that of the main ranch house, was on July 5, 1936.

The best and most complete history of the subject is Ellsworth Collings' *The 101 Ranch,* published in 1937 by the University of Oklahoma Press.

If you have a question, send it to Chuck Parsons, Western Publications, P.O. Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076. Please keep questions brief. Sign your full name and address, including zip code. Names and addresses will be published if question is used. Space limitations may not permit us to use all questions.

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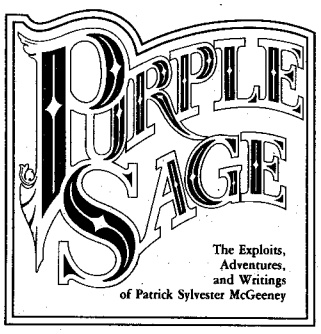

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"Free the Youngers!"

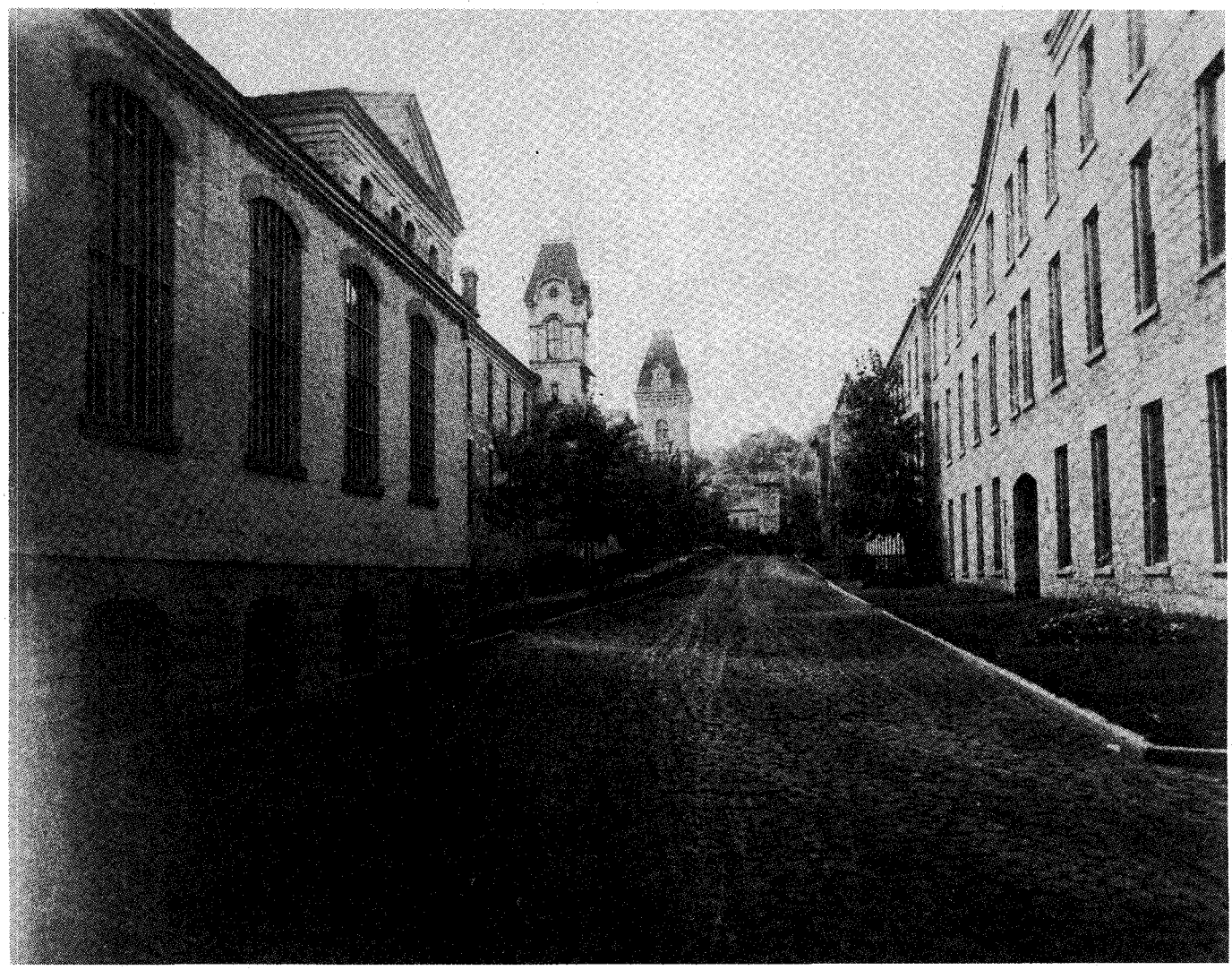
By E. LISLE REEDSTROM

The room was alive with excitement; the judge swung his gavel hard before him in an effort to restrain the crowd. Newsmen pushed their way from the courtroom while women cried aloud, mopping their eyes with handkerchiefs. One woman got into the aisle and began pushing towards the three shackled prisoners, shouting she wanted to kiss them, but the uniformed guards held her back.

Judge Lord, of the district court had just passed sentence on the three notorious outlaws standing before him. Cole, Jim, and Bob Younger, part of the James-Younger gang, had tried to hold up the First National Bank in Northfield, Minnesota, on September 7, 1876.

The three Younger brothers faced a grand jury on four charges: the murder of Joseph L. Heywood, the cashier; the murder of innocent bystander Nicholas Gustavson, a Swede; robbery of the First National Bank; and assault on the teller, A.E. Bunker. However, the Youngers' counsel had informed them of a Minnesota law barring the death penalty for anyone who pleaded guilty. The most they could expect was a life sentence, which is what Judge Lord gave them. Facing jail in the Stillwater territorial prison, the outlaws were now wards of the state of Minnesota.

The Youngers entered the main gates of the Stillwater penitentiary and guards escorted them through its grim corridors. All was quiet except for their echoing footsteps. Unfamiliar faces watched from behind dark cell doors as the three famous bandits walked to the five-by-seven-by-eight-foot cells they would occupy for the remainder of their lives. The limping, wounded trio eyed the forbidding cold stone walls and iron ceilings of the prison, which looked strong enough to withstand fire from the crack of doom itself.



Minnesota Historical Society

One of the cobblestone streets within the walls of Stillwater state prison, circa 1895. On the left is the library where Cole Younger was employed.

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On each cell door was painted the name of its occupant. As each brother stepped before his name, the heavy iron door swung open. Each man entered his cell, then heard the deafening noise of the steel door slamming behind him.

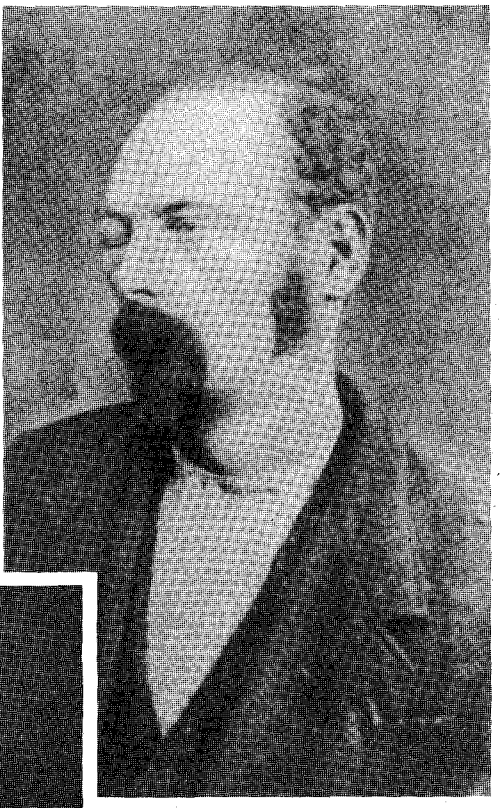
At the beginning of prison life, Cole had the job of making buckets and tubs, but because his and his brothers' wounds were not completely healed, prison officials gave them easier tasks in the thresher factory. Extra guards watched them with instructions to shoot to kill should they make any fast moves. That was indeed the last thing on Cole's mind as his intentions were to become a model prisoner and earn a pardon.

The thrilling news of the Younger brothers' incarceration spread quickly. Reporters came from all over the country trying to get interviews with the desperados. The lucky ones who got permission to see the Youngers were somewhat surprised to find Cole a rather mild mannered, dignified man whose speech was grammatically correct.

All Photos: Carl Breihan

Bob Younger wasted away from tuberculosis and died in prison, still serving his sentence.

The Youngers entered the main gates of the Stillwater penitentiary and guards escorted them through its grim corridors. Unfamiliar faces watched them from behind dark cell doors as the three bandits walked to the five-by-seven-by-eight-foot cells they would occupy for the remainder of their lives.



Representatives from women's clubs also came to see the famous trio. Cole enjoyed every minute of those visits, as long as the questions were simple enough and did not pry into his bandit days. Bob was always depressed and evaded the meetings as much as he could. Jim, embarrassed by his deformed jaw (wounded during the escape from Northfield), could hardly make himself understood. He, too, avoided visitors. Many women asked if the boys wished they had led different lives. Cole politely told the ladies that he sadly wished he had, which seemed to give the women an immense amount of satisfaction.

A St. Paul, Minnesota, organization took an interest in probing the mysteries of Cole's mind and skull. Members of the St. Paul Chapter of the Phrenological Society believed the configurations of the human head could reveal a man's character. The man behind this group was Orson Fowler, of New York, who had drawn a chart illustrating different cranial bumps which showed just how the human mind

Jim (left) and Cole Younger (above), right after their capture. Jim was shot in the jaw. Cole, his right eye shut and swollen from a rifle bullet, also suffered many other wounds which he carried to his grave.

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operated. People actually believed that the bumps gave the solution to the problem of human behavior, and New York employers made job applicants go to Fowler for a head reading before they could receive jobs. Armed with Fowler's chart, Professor George Morris of St. Paul went to Stillwater prison to explore Cole Younger's head.

Cole was mystified as he sat in the warden's office, watching Professor Morris open his little black bag and withdraw a tape measure. Morris went about measuring Cole's head and jotting down notes in his small notebook. With a pair of calipers, Morris carefully measured the bumps on the bandit's head and recorded his findings. Then the professor placed a papier-maché mask over Cole's head and fitted it to his skull with meticulous care. After the examination, the professor shook hands and thanked Cole.

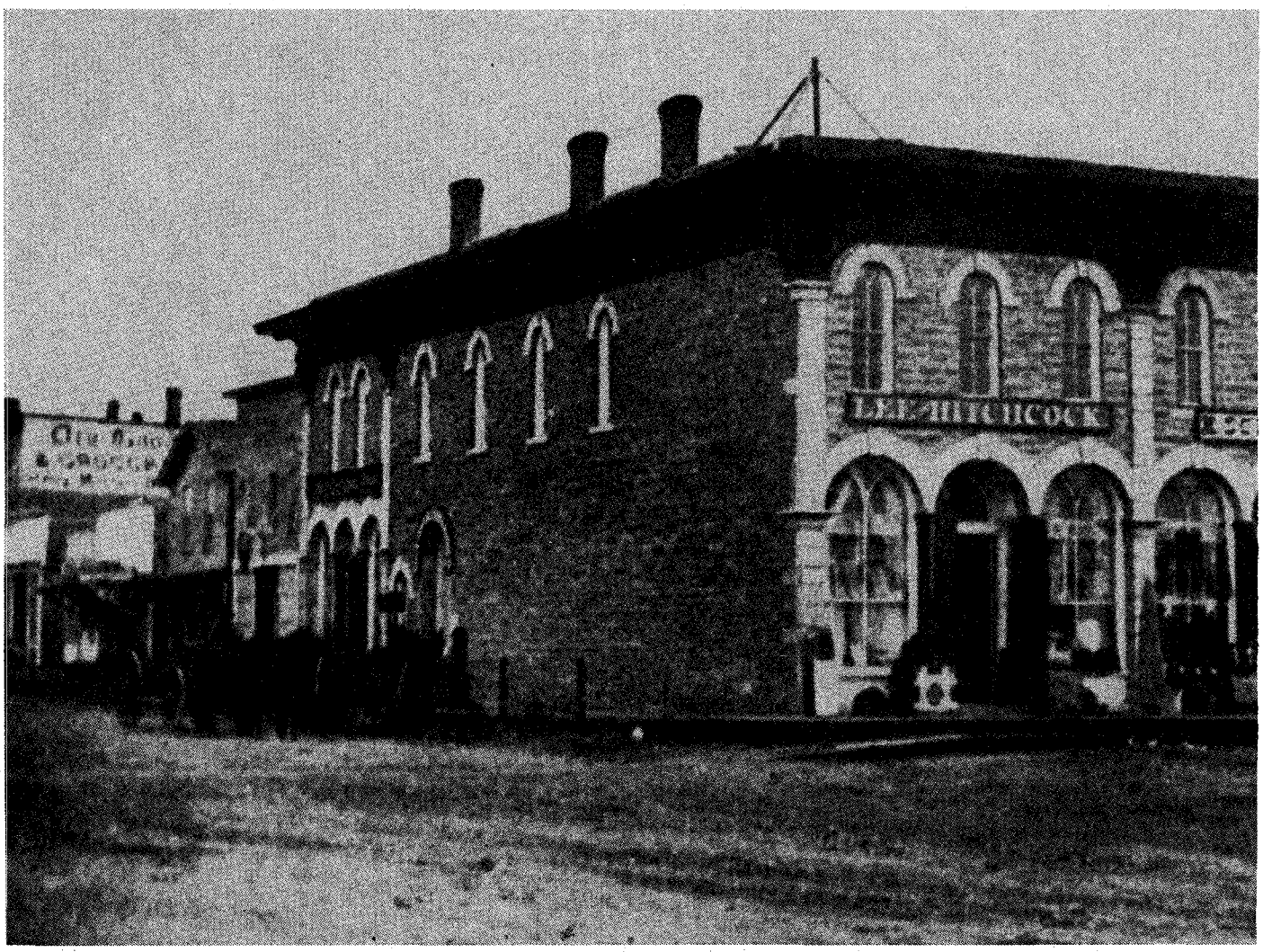
It was a few days before Cole was summoned back to the warden's office and given a report of the professor's findings. His conclusions were, "The subject is a natural leader, if he had been in the North and educated at West Point, he would have been as useful a man as General [Philip H.] Sheridan or General [Winfield Scott] Hancock."

Prison officials later promoted Cole from the thresher factory to the library. He now had the opportunity to read books on many subjects that interested him. The library was a large, well-lighted hall where he could receive visitors without going to the warden's office. A huge bay window overlooked the prison yard, and the new librarian could look out and watch the other convicts exercise or play handball.

Now and then Jim and Bob visited their brother or sat quietly reading. Cole was worried about Jim, as he became moody and irritable. He began reading socialist literature and became a radical. Jim's main problem was his painful jaw, which frequently acted up. When the Youngers were first captured and taken to the Flanders House in Faribault, Minnesota, Jim had a local doctor probe for the bullet unsuccessfully. The only thing he removed was a segment of jawbone holding two of Jim's teeth. Jim pleaded with doctors for months until T.C. Clarke, the prison doctor, finally removed the bullet, which had lodged just beneath the brain. The only safe access to the projectile was through the roof of Jim's mouth. After several attempts, the operation was a success.

Cole later became bored with his librarian job and asked to be transferred to the prison hospital. Authorities granted his wish.

On April 4, 1882, Cole was summoned to receive a visitor in the warden's office and found a reporter waiting for him. The reporter told Cole that Bob Ford had shot Jesse James at St. Joseph, Missouri. The reporter pressed Cole about his close relationship with the bank and train robber. Cole denied it, saying he did not know Jesse well and had only been an acquaintance during the latter part of the Civil War. Furthermore, he had no sympathy for a man who was in the kind of business in which Jesse was reported to have



The First National Bank in Northfield, Minnesota, after the attempted robbery in 1876. The bank is at far left under the three arches

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been. Then the reporter asked about the Northfield raid. It was a question that had been asked many times: Were Frank and Jesse with them when they hit the bank?

Cole answered, "There were two men with us, Howard and Woods, who were never taken into custody."

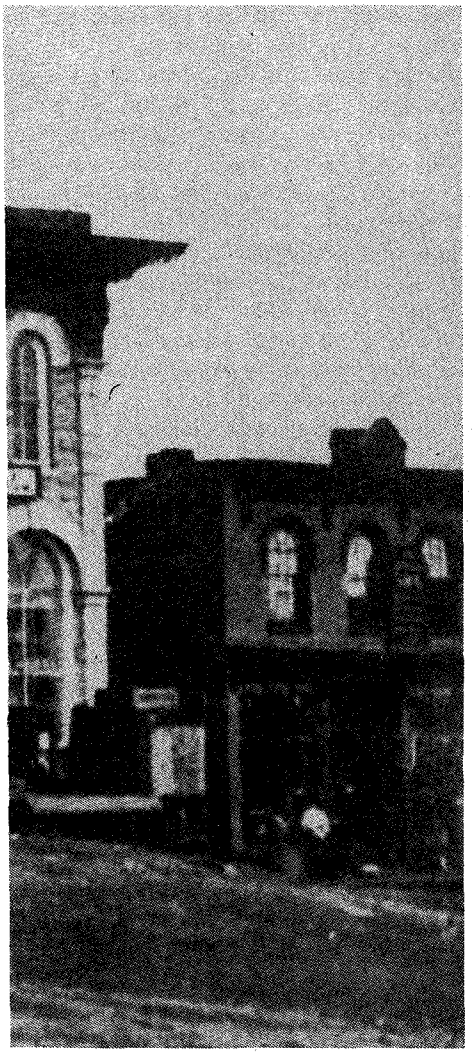
After closely studying the prisoner and watching his movements, the reporter found he could not press Cole any further. He dropped the matter completely and left.

The fall of 1883 marked seven years for the Youngers as model prisoners. One day a bit of Cole's past caught up with him when one Warren Carter Bronaugh came to visit. Bronaugh had been a young Confederate dispatch rider when Cole Younger, dressed in the same uniform, stopped him on Chapel Hill Road near Lone Jack, Missouri, in 1862. They were so close to the battle lines they could hear the clatter of rifle fire and see white puffs of cannon smoke over the horizon. Cole warned the young man that if he continued any further, he would ride straight into a nest of Union soldiers. Cole made an impression on the young courier that day. Bronaugh thanked him and rode off in another direction to complete his mission. Bronaugh never learned the man's name, but his face had burned an indelible image into his mind. Cole had saved the young soldier's life.

Minnesota Historical Society

Cole Younger, sentenced November 20, 1876, to life at Stillwater territorial prison. Prison number 699; thirty-two years old; height, five feet, eleven and one-half inches; weight, 230 pounds; occupation, farmer; native Missouri State. He is pictured here in his prison uniform of black and white checkered coat and pants.

Carl Breihan Photo



where the horse and wagon are parked.

Bronaugh read the article about the Younger brothers' capture after the Northfield raid and saw Cole Younger's picture. It was the same nice-mannered soldier who had saved him that day near Lone Jack almost twenty years earlier. An ambitious urge overcame him, and he vowed not to rest until he tried to free Cole from prison. Bronaugh was only a farmer living near Clinton, Missouri, with little money, but a deep obligation to Cole.

A visit to Stillwater prison was next, to see Cole Younger and make certain the outlaw was his benefactor. Bronaugh was on his honeymoon when he and his wife registered at the St. Paul Merchant's Hotel. There his wife stayed until he returned.

At Stillwater, Warden A.J. Reed greeted Bronaugh and studied the man for several moments while the Missourian presented his case enthusiastically. Finally, the warden consented and allowed Bronaugh to see Stillwater's famous bandit.

Reed ordered a guard to "Take this man to see Cole Younger, but make him bare his sleeve to the elbow and stand close enough so you can understand every word said."

Bronaugh was not the only man to visit the Younger brothers in prison. A number of other men had already assured the boys of their interest in getting them a quick pardon. But after several visits, Cole had learned that their friendship had a price, and he was skeptical while listening to Bronaugh present another wild scheme that might build up his hopes on false promises.

At the cell door, Bronaugh extended his bare arm through the bars and shook Cole's hand with a hard grip. As they stood there in conversation, Bronaugh asked whether Cole remembered him. He didn't, but when the younger man related the episode near the Battle of Lone Jack, Cole muttered that he slightly remembered the incident. "I would not be here had you not saved me from being captured," said Bronaugh, "and I want to show you my appreciation for the deed by getting you out of Stillwater Prison."

Cole must have chuckled to himself; if anyone was to get him and his brothers out of prison, it would be the parole board, the Minnesota governor—or almighty God. Cole politely thanked Bronaugh and bade him good-day.

Eager to meet all of the Youngers and explain his visit there, Bronaugh went to Jim Younger's cell. Bronaugh spoke with Jim, and assured him that he was going to do everything in his power to free him and his brothers if they continued being model prisoners. Bronaugh also visited Bob Younger, whom he found intelligent and neat in appearance, but somewhat distant in conversation.

Bronaugh returned to his wife in St. Paul, only to tour the city, stopping at businesses, questioning citizens

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Carl Breihan Photo

Seated, from left to right, Bob, Jim, and Cole. Standing is their sister, Henrietta Younger.

whether they were in favor of releasing the Younger brothers from prison and asking their reasons for denying any petition. Even after seven years the memory of the Youngers' crimes had not faded from the minds of Minnesotans who still harbored resentment toward Missourians. "You're a fool even to propose such an idea," was the concensus that greeted Bronaugh.

Returning to Missouri, Bronaugh continued polling public opinion on the subject in different parts of the state. Not satisfied with the way things were going, he resolved to correspond with prominent and influential men in other states. He kept up an agitation that would finally help gain the Youngers' release from prison in 1901.

On August 10, 1887, after several years of attempting to establish a newspaper to brighten prison life, carefully selected convicts used their own money to start the *Prison Mirror*. All they needed was $200, and fifteen prisoners each deposited ten dollars or more toward a trust fund to buy a used press and other necessary items. They would devote the net profits from the paper to the prison library for the purchase of books and periodicals as the warden might select. Cole, who was once again a librarian, Bob, and Jim contributed fifty dollars from their prison earnings to the trust fund, making them the principal shareholders.

The *St. Paul Daily Globe* reported, "Cole Younger, librarian of the prison, had made the richest atonement within his power for the error of his past life. The good that the Mirror will do for his fellow prisoners will be a monument to his memory that many a more fortunate person than Cole Younger might envy."

The paper was a complete success, and Cole got better library books, which he covered with cloth for protection. Jim, who acted as prison postmaster, had his hands full as the *Mirror's* mail began to pour in. It was the first printing press ever set up in a penal institution and operated successfully by prison convicts. Today the *Prison Mirror* is 103 years old and still going strong.

During the Northfield raid, Bob had been shot through the lung, and complications began to set in. He was literally wasting away from incurable tuberculosis. Cole would visit with Bob in the prison hospital, sitting for hours at his bedside and reading to him. When it seemed that Bob was failing rapidly, word was sent to the Youngers' sister, Henrietta.

On Monday evening, September 16, 1889, Bob died quietly. His funeral was held in the prison chapel, and the body was taken to Lee's Summit, Missouri, and buried in the family plot. Bob was several weeks short of thirty-six years old.

In the meantime, Bronaugh was still campaigning for the release of Cole and Jim Younger. He believed fully that these men would be law-abiding citizens if released, instead of remaining a burden to the state as inmates.

The governor of Missouri discouraged Bronaugh, telling him the Youngers would never be released and that he would assist in no way. Bronaugh next turned to Missouri's state representatives and state senators. Both offices would do nothing to help murderous outlaws such as the Youngers get out of prison. By this time, Bronaugh had mortgaged his home, and he was running out of money. He needed money for letters, telegrams, and travel expenses, so he began to take donations in any amount from sympathizers.

Bronaugh would not be discouraged. He wrote and received thousands of letters, which he stuffed into a leather satchel called his "Cole Younger Grip." With that grip he visited any influential officer who would listen to him, opening the grip and displaying the testimonials.

Bronaugh saw a Baptist minister in Kansas City who gave him a letter of introduction to George A. Pillsbury, the flour manufacturer and richest man in Minnesota. The minister had received $20,000 from Pillsbury each year for foreign missionary work; Bronaugh might also melt the heart of the millionaire. Out of curiosity, Pillsbury listened to Bronaugh's pleas, but in the end refused him.

Bronaugh fell deeper in debt; his family suffered; he withstood one hardship after another—rebuffs, indignities,

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and even threats on his life. He took a job managing a Confederate soldiers' home in Missouri, where he wrote letters to important people, besides visiting them and accepting any contribution. He sometimes added the contributions to his personal funds to help his family.

The nation began to wonder if Bronaugh's constant pleading and pestering of political officers for favors or money would ever stop. One day a newspaper article threatened to destroy Bronaugh's plans. The paper dug up a story recounting how Cole Younger had lined up fifteen captured Union prisoners just to see how many men the Enfield rifle's ball would penetrate. There was no truth to the story, but it damaged Bronaugh's reputation and alarmed Cole furiously. On August 1, 1886, Cole wrote Gov. William R. Marshall of Minnesota, denying the episode.

Bronaugh visited the governor of Minnesota, pleading with him at least to recommend a pardon for the Youngers. The governor refused the request, as it would have been political suicide. The state of Minnesota had just released a statement that no candidate who advocated freeing the Youngers could run for governor.

On July 8, 1897, it was announced that the board of pardons would meet in Gov. David M. Clough's office in St. Paul, to review the Youngers' case. Immediately the whole state was aroused. Teams of wagons loaded with farmers came to protest. A delegation from Northfield demanded vengeance. When the parole board convened, the mayor of Faribault, A.D. Keyes, asked three questions of Cole Younger: Was Frank James with them at Northfield? Who was the last to leave the bank? And who rode the dun horse? If the Youngers were the good citizens they claimed to be, they would tell the truth and assist the authorities in bringing the Northfield murderer to justice. The three questions enraged Cole. Should he reveal the dark secret which he had kept for all those years? He might further his chances for a quick pardon if he did. On the other hand, Cole had a close relationship with Frank James, and he would be loyal to him even if it tarnished his own record. Cole saw that he had to make a statement. "The man who killed the cashier was one of the men who rode with us under the name of Howard and Woods." That was all he said.

Others present at the meeting showed evidence from affidavits charging that Cole had killed the unfortunate Swede, Gustavson, who did not understand English when the escaping outlaws ordered him out of the way. Instead of freeing the Youngers, the meeting harmed them.

Lady Luck, however, finally smiled on Bronaugh. The governor of Minnesota, who had been born in Missouri, contacted Bronaugh. He wanted to discuss the Younger situation with the governor of Missouri. Bronaugh, now mediating between two governors, did all he could to bring about action. He revealed hundreds of letters from his famous "grip," some from people of distinction.

Things began to change. The same people who had been bitterly hostile to Bronaugh now began to accept that the Youngers had been punished enough. The border war, which angered so many people earlier, had disappeared amid the turmoil of a fast-changing America.

Bronaugh was close to securing a conditional pardon for the Youngers from the board of parole. On July 10, 1901, the board took up Cole and Jim Younger's applications for parole. Bronaugh raced to St. Paul and checked into the same hotel he had gone to on his honeymoon eighteen years before.

The Youngers were the sensation of the hour. Hotels, homes, and businesses buzzed with speculation about the destiny of the two reformed outlaws. The parole was the subject of editorials by newspapers throughout the United States. Everyone held their breath.

Word spread like prairie fire; the board of parole had finally granted a conditional pardon stipulating that neither of the Youngers were to leave Minnesota. In addition, while on the outside, Cole and Jim were not to be exhibited in any dime circus, museum, opera house, theater, or any other public place of amusement where a charge was collected for admission. Furthermore, on the twentieth day of each month, each man would have to write a personal report about himself, his whereabouts, status of work, and so forth. He would also abstain from intoxicating liquors.

Both brothers were at their posts when they received a summons to the chief warden's office. They were informed to put on civilian suits before seeing the warden. It was not unusual to change clothes in midday, but to their surprise, when the warden confronted them he handed them both a valise and said, "Here's a grip for each of you—good luck."

Cole was nearly fifty-seven years old and almost bald. He was somewhat stockily built with a chalk-white prison complexion. Jim was four years younger than Cole, but because of his smashed jawbone, he could only take liquid nourishment, which had an adverse effect on his health during his twenty-five years in prison. He had lost weight and looked pale and underfed.

One day a newspaper article threatened to destroy Bronaugh's plans. The paper dug up a story recounting how Cole Younger had lined up fifteen Union prisoners just to see how many men the Enfield rifle's ball would penetrate. There was no truth to the story, but it damaged Bronaugh's reputation and alarmed Cole furiously.

Both men walked briskly down the hallway toward the "freedom gates" where Bronaugh eagerly awaited them along with a number of correspondents hoping to get a statement from the famous outlaws.

Bronaugh gave both Cole and Jim a hearty handshake. Cole turned to the newsmen and said, "Gents, it's a wonderful feeling to be free. I haven't a grudge against anyone in the world." Jim walked alongside his brother in silence, making no comments.

Cole and Jim went to work immediately selling tombstones for the P.N. Peterson Granite Company, earning sixty dollars a month. Families were delighted to have such distinguished guests visit them in their homes and often invited them for a home-cooked dinner. But that didn't sell tombstones.

Jim became despondent and discouraged, and took a job writing life insurance. After a month, his company found out he was a released convict on conditional parole and, according to state law, could not draw up a legal contract. Besides that, the law thwarted his plans to marry newspaper writer Alice J. Miller. The law forbade a parolled convict to enter into a legal marriage, and his effort to secure a full pardon so that law would not affect him failed. With his health steadily declining, he shut himself up in his hotel room, day after day, brooding. On Sunday morning, October 19, 1902, Jim shot himself in the head with a small caliber pistol.

In February 1903, Bronaugh finally

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persuaded the board of pardons to reverse its ruling to an unconditional pardon. They then ordered Cole Younger to leave the state and never come back. He was free to go anywhere he wanted, except Minnesota. But what of his own state of Missouri? After bringing disgrace to it, would he be welcome there? When the last of the Youngers returned to Lee's Summit, the townspeople began to accept the old rascal and he began to rekindle old friendships.

Frank James arrived at Lee's Summit without any fanfare. It is not known whether the meeting was prearranged, but it was the first time the two ex-outlaws had seen each other since the Northfield raid. They called each other "Buck" and "Bud" again, names they used in their riding days. Frank thanked Cole for the silence which had kept him out of custody.

Cole went from job to job, not quite knowing what he was looking for. Wild West shows were enjoying a huge success following in the footsteps of Buffalo Bill. A Chicago man made Cole an offer. For a handsome price Cole would appear in the "Cole Younger-Frank James Wild West Show."

Knowing the parole board would not consent to his exhibiting himself on any stage before the public for any amount of money, Cole was hesitant. Nevertheless, he agreed to join if Frank also consented. Frank did, and the venture was successful. Cole, however, stayed off the stage and performed other duties. Crowds poured in just to see both outlaws, regardless of what they were doing.

Carl Breihan Photo

Cole Younger astride a Mexican burro while visiting Colorado Springs in 1912.

Old age and the show sapped much of their strength, and Frank requested early retirement on the old family homestead. With a tidy sum saved up, Cole lasted a few years longer, then returned to Lee's Summit, where he purchased a home and lived with his niece, Nora Hall, and her husband.

With plenty of time to think and reassess his life, Cole began to attend local revivalist meetings, hardly missing a gathering. He decided to spread the word that a life of crime was, in reality, a tragedy. He also wrote *The Story of Cole Younger,* a 123-page booklet.

With a friend, Cole embarked on a lecture tour through six states. He sold books and told stories of the great war and his prison days. The moral of his seventy-five-minute speech was that "Crime Doesn't Pay."

Back at his home in Lee's Summit, Cole confined himself to his easy chair, smoking his long Meerschaum pipe and relating a story or two about his exciting past to visitors. Cole still carried fourteen bullets in his heavy frame and he tired easily. Whenever his legs felt weak and shaky, he would complain, "I guess all that lead I'm carrying around is starting to pull me down."

Word came to Cole that Frank James had died on February 15, 1915, where he had lived on the old James family farm near Kearney, Missouri. Cole had also been ill, and the doctor allowed no visitors for the bedridden outlaw. Cole Younger, the last of the great outlaws, died on February 21, 1916, at the age of seventy-two. He was in the company of his nieces and nephews. Some old Missouri outlaws from the Civil War showed up for Cole's funeral, but were too feeble to stand at the gravesite. Pallbearers were Jesse James, Jr.; Frank James' son, Robert F. James; and a few other close friends. Also present was the widow of Frank James, who concealed her emotions under a black veil.

And what of Warren C. Bronaugh? He had sacrified everything and spent years fighting the system, almost going broke in the process, just to free the Youngers. It would have been gentlemanly for Cole Younger to extend his appreciation to Bronaugh by letter or in person, as they lived close to each other. But for some unknown reason, Cole never mentioned Bronaugh's name in any conversation or newspaper article, even though the man had contributed more than a little to freeing the Youngers.

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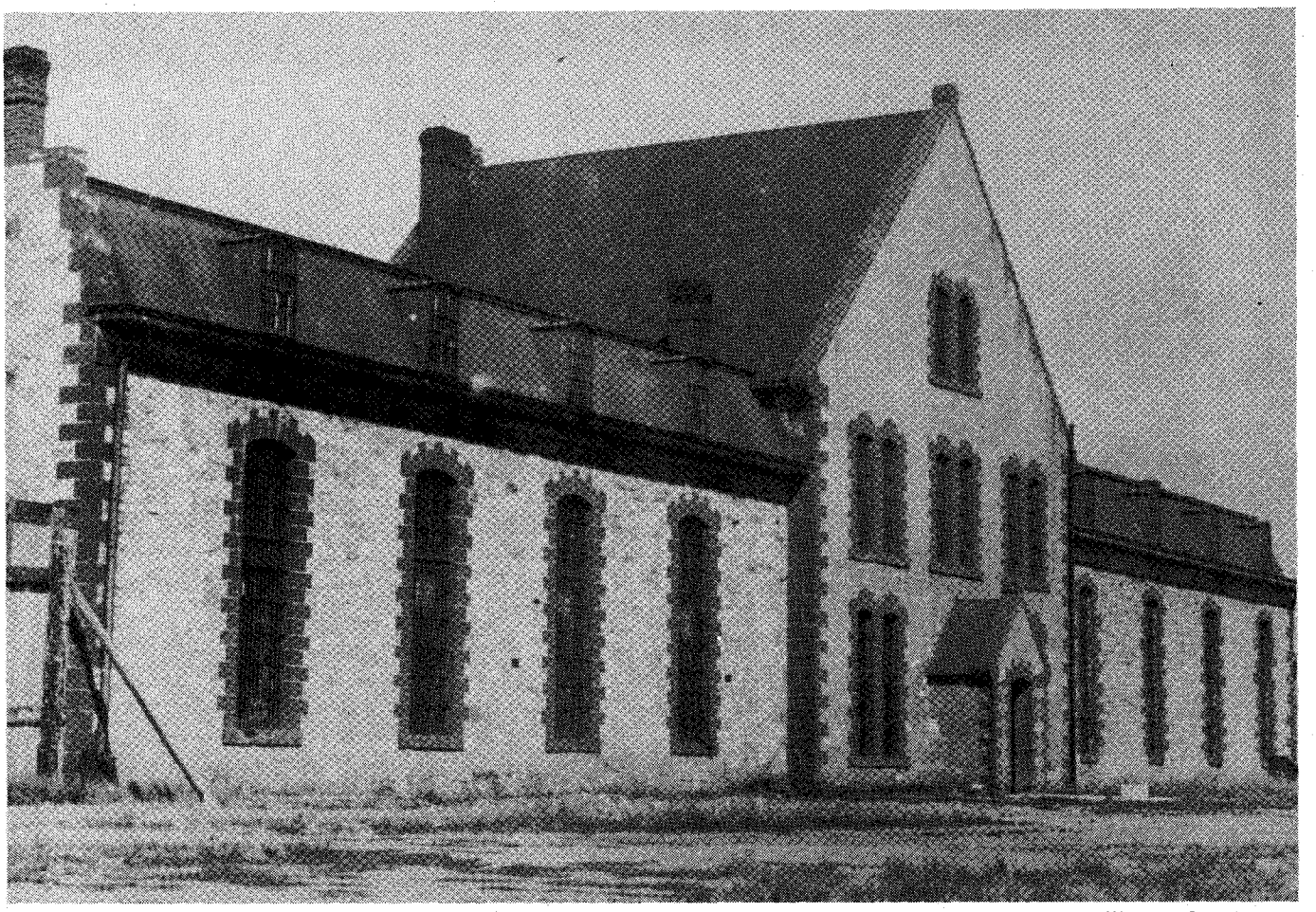

Wyoming State Museum

The Wyoming territorial penitentiary in Laramie. Built before statehood, the building is being refurbished as part of the state's centennial celebration. An Old West theme park will be developed around the site in the next ten years.

Locked Up In Laramie

By WIL HUETT

Butch Cassidy slept here. He also ate here, washed his clothes here, and probably made bricks or brooms or quarried stone here. Butch Cassidy became prisoner number 187 here in 1894—the only time he was captured, tried, and sentenced for his crimes.

Here is the Wyoming territorial penitentiary at Laramie.

By the time Cassidy saw the inside of this imposing sandstone structure it was more than twenty years old and had belonged to the new state of Wyoming for nearly four years. Now, after thirty years as a prison and ninety years as a livestock barn, the historic penitentiary is being restored as the centerpiece of a heritage theme park dedicated to law and justice in the West.

When the railroad arrived in 1868, Laramie City, Wyoming Territory, was a rough and tumble frontier town. The addition of railroad workers to the ranks of soldiers and cowboys, gamblers and drifters prompted a new nickname for the town—Hell on Wheels. Apparently the town deserved the title; that autumn vigilante groups hanged five men.

The military was supposed to house criminals who got lesser sentences but in 1869, Church Howe, the U.S. marshal in Cheyenne wrote Washington saying military authorities had refused to take his prisoners. In 1870, Lt. Col. J.H. Porter, the commander of Fort Sanders near Laramie, asked his superiors for permission to stop housing civilian prisoners and to remove those already in his guardhouse.

The wheels of government, both federal and territorial, began turning. Territorial Governor John A. Campbell made arrangements to house prisoners in Detroit, Michigan, while the request

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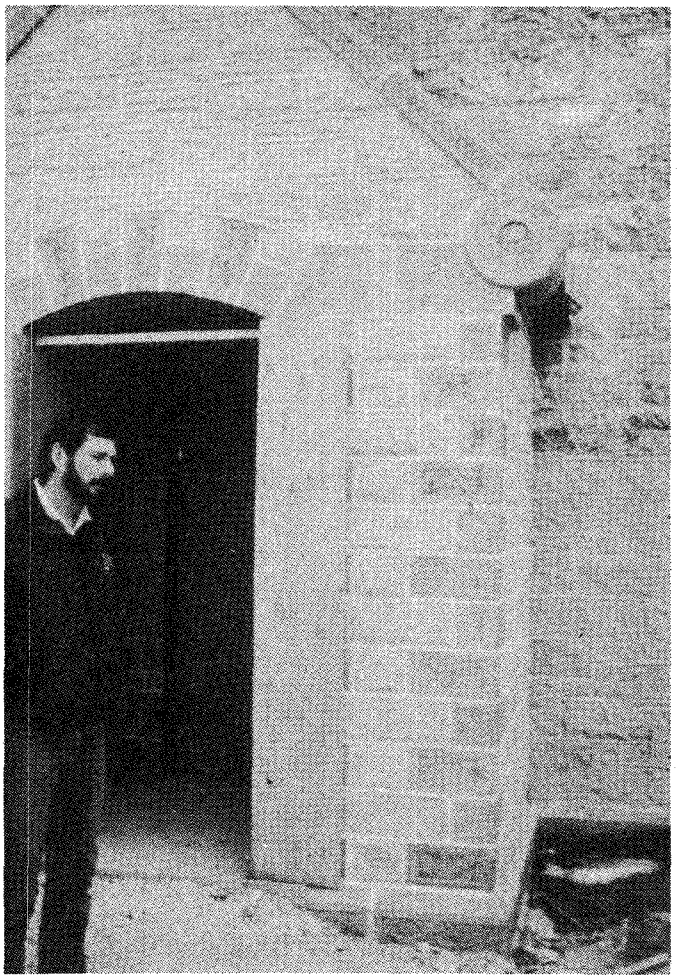

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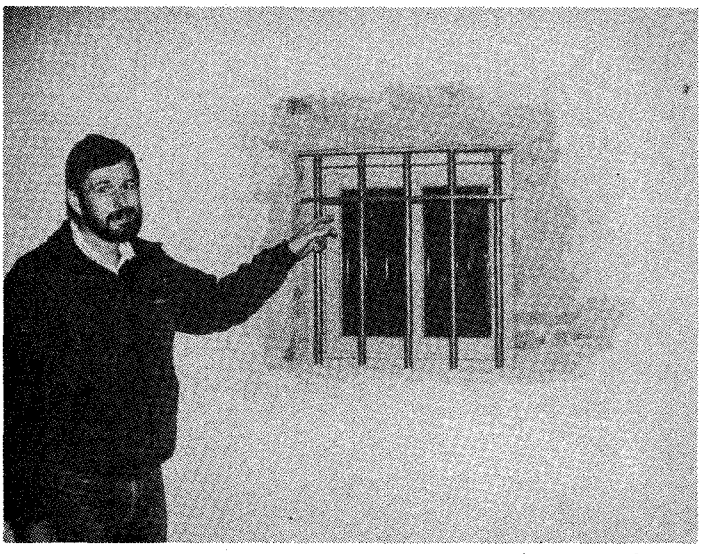

Above: A window that goes nowhere. Jeff Hauff, manager of the Wyoming territorial prison site, points to a window that was walled up. Apparently it was installed before anyone realized the warden's office would be on the other side. Left: Two colors of sandstone make the Wyoming territorial prison a handsome building. The front portico has been reconstructed with stone from the original quarry.

for federal funding made its way through Washington. By October 1872, the initial wing of the new territorial prison was ready. The first two prisoners arrived in January 1873.

Thirty years later the government abandoned the building as a prison and turned it over to the University of Wyoming. Though gutted and used as a barn for nearly a century, the building held up well. It will open next summer as part of the first phase of a unique western theme park. A preview opening was held in July as part of Wyoming's centennial celebration.

The second oldest surviving government building in Wyoming, the penitentiary will become a museum of Old West law and justice. Visitors will get to see the views Butch Cassidy saw from behind heavy, steel-grate doors. They will be able to step into guard cages overlooking the cellblocks and visit the area set aside for women prisoners.

Visitors to the restored prison may experience the "closed in" feeling an outdoorsman like Butch Cassidy felt when he was locked up in Laramie. Jeff Hauff, historical site manager, says each of the cellblocks had three levels totalling forty-two cells. Each cell was designed to sleep two prisoners in canvas hammocks. A central area housed the warden's office, guards' quarters, and dining hall. In the original north wing the cells were brick and measured six by eight feet. The south wing, added in 1889, had steel cells of a different size—five by seven feet.

THOUGH it was sometimes crowded enough to pack the allotted two prisoners into each tiny cell, the prison was underpopulated much of the time. Disputes over costs were among the reasons. The federal government ran the prison and charged the territorial government one dollar per day per prisoner. Officials thought that was too high; after all, a prisoner could be housed at the Detroit House of Corrections for $1.25 a week. The result was that the territorial government began sending most of its long-term prisoners elsewhere, notably to Detroit; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Joliet, Illinois.

Statistics show the result. In May 1881, there were ten territorial and nine federal inmates; in September 1882, five territorial and fourteen federal; in January 1884, only three territorial prisoners and sixteen federal inmates. By March 1886, there were no territorial prisoners in the territorial prison.

Federal managers and local officials squabbled over other matters as well. One was funding and its effects on staff and security.

In the first two years of prison operation eleven of forty-four prisoners escaped. Hauff says one of them walked away while handling the evening chore of feeding a "pet" pronghorn antelope which ate from the hands of prisoners and personnel. Shortly thereafter authorities built a wooden stockade around the building.

Escapes continued and their frequency created criticism of U.S. Justice Department cost-cutting measures. In 1880 guards' wages fell from sixty-five dollars to fifty dollars a month and the warden took a cut from ninety-two dollars to seventy-five dollars monthly. In April of that year warden F.O. Horn was guarding sixteen prisoners alone when three trusties overpowered him. They locked Horn in one of his own cells, then helped themselves to his clothes and guns and headed for the nearby mountains. Some say Horn, when released, armed other prisoners as a posse. It is known he was fired for gross

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neglect, but that may have been more for waiting three days to report the incident than for allowing the escape.

When prisoners did escape they had a vast and relatively empty land in which to get lost—a land which boasted several famous hideouts. The fabled Hole-In-The-Wall lies about 150 miles north of Laramie. Starr Valley, on the Wyoming-Idaho border near Afton, is 250 miles to the west. Butch Cassidy's favorite hideout, Brown's Hole on the Wyoming-Utah-Colorado border, is 200 miles to the southwest.

Another matter of dispute between federal and territorial authorities was the use of prison labor. Shortly after the first inmates arrived prison officials worked out a deal with the owner of a nearby brickyard. He paid eighty cents a day per man. Another contract had convicts removing wood from nearby Laramie River. This apparently meant finding railroad ties that had escaped hackers working upstream. In winter prisoners cut and stored ice from the river on a contract with the Union Pacific Railroad.

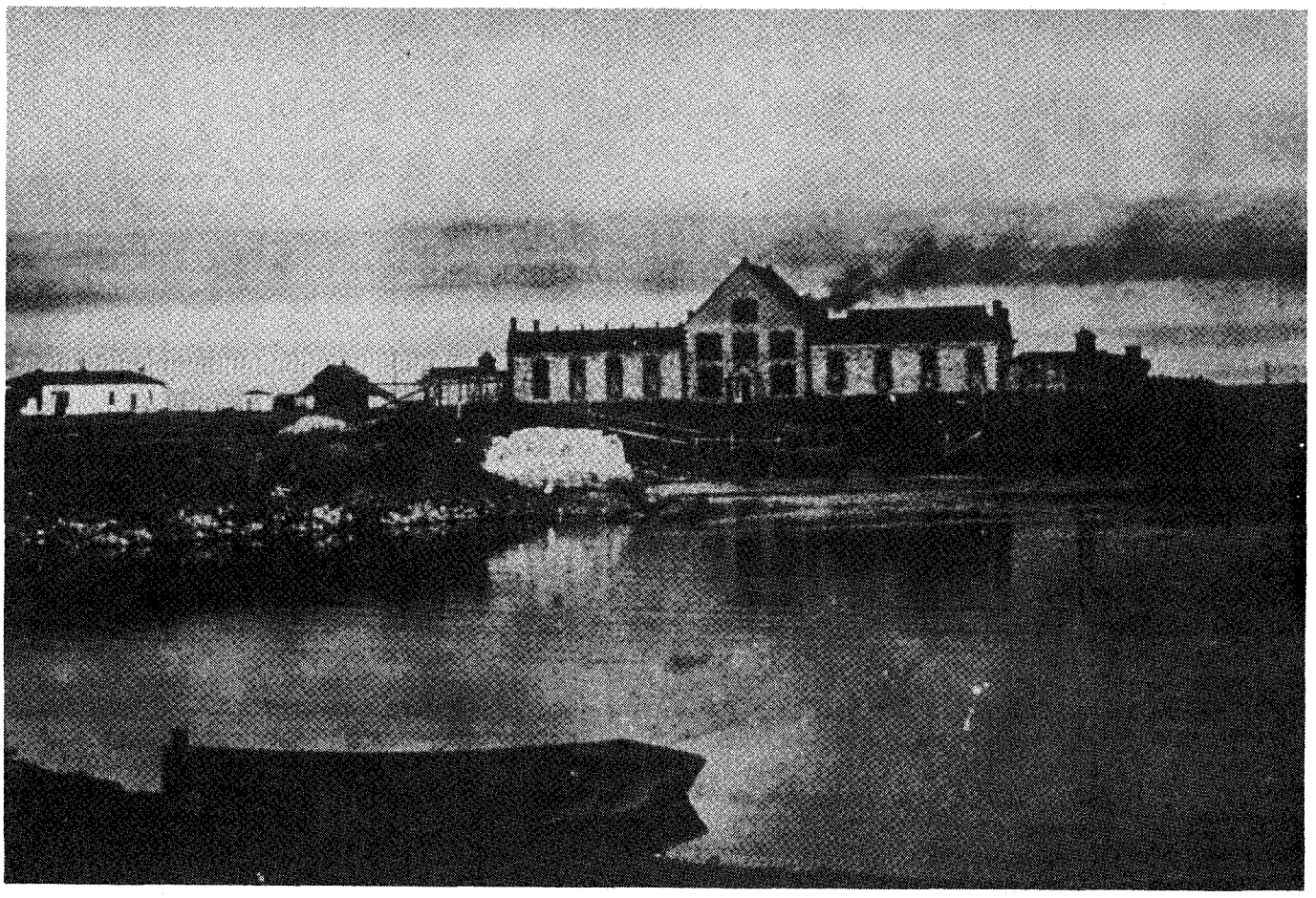
Prisoners also tried agriculture. Justice Department Special Agent P.J. Forney noted in 1876 that inmates had raised potatoes and would have netted a handsome profit had not an early August frost reduced the expected 4,000-bushel yield to 800 bushels. Forney later noted that the prison potato experiment was the only farming being done in the high altitude (7,000 feet) of the Laramie valley.

When the railroad arrived in 1868, Laramie City was a rough and tumble frontier town. The addition of railroad workers to the ranks of soldiers and cowboys, gamblers and drifters prompted a new nickname for the town—Hell on Wheels. Apparently the town deserved the title; that autumn vigilante groups hanged five men.

Territorial officials looked at the successful ventures and petitioned the federal government to deduct the wages of their prisoners from the costs of maintaining them. Though federal officials finally heard their pleas, it took so long that Wyoming authorities had already started sending prisoners out of the territory to cheaper facilities.

When the new state of Wyoming took over the prison in 1891, federal officials found the tables had turned. The rate the state charged to house federal prisoners was seventy cents per day and the justice department complained that twenty-five to fifty cents was the going rate in similar facilities.

Hauff says archaeological efforts during the restoration turned up a number of interesting items: a metal box apparently hidden by a prisoner, what appears to be a cell key carved out of wood, and the prison's trash dump. "We're finding a lot of bones that should tell us what they ate around here. So far it looks like a lot of soup bones," said Hauff. Considering the later financial arrangements of prison operatives, that may not be surprising.



Wyoming State Archives

The prison as it looked in about 1896.

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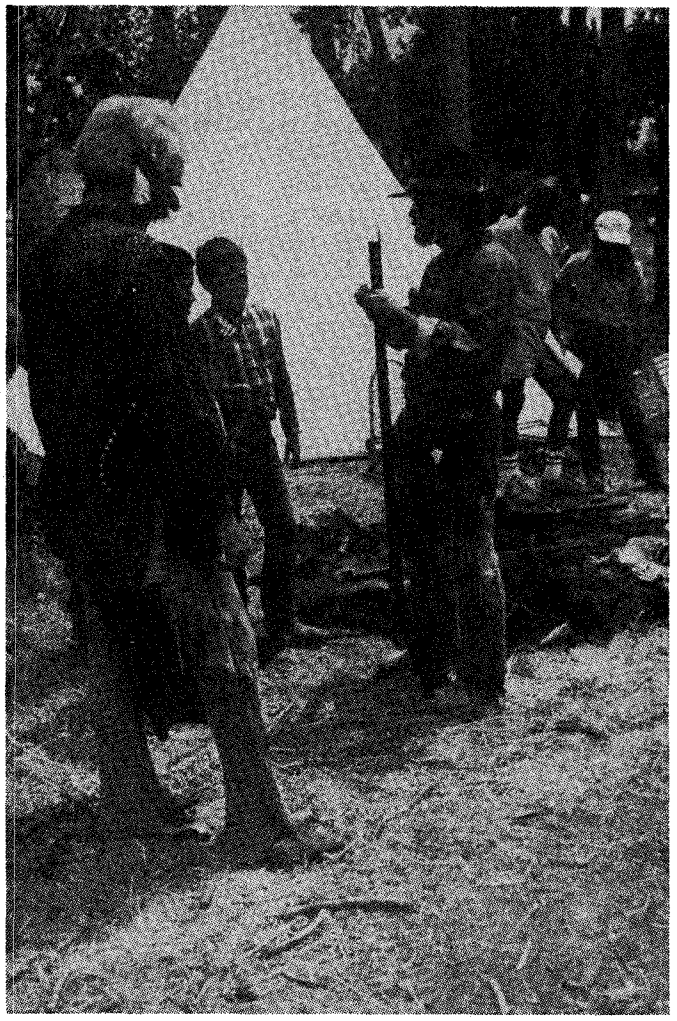

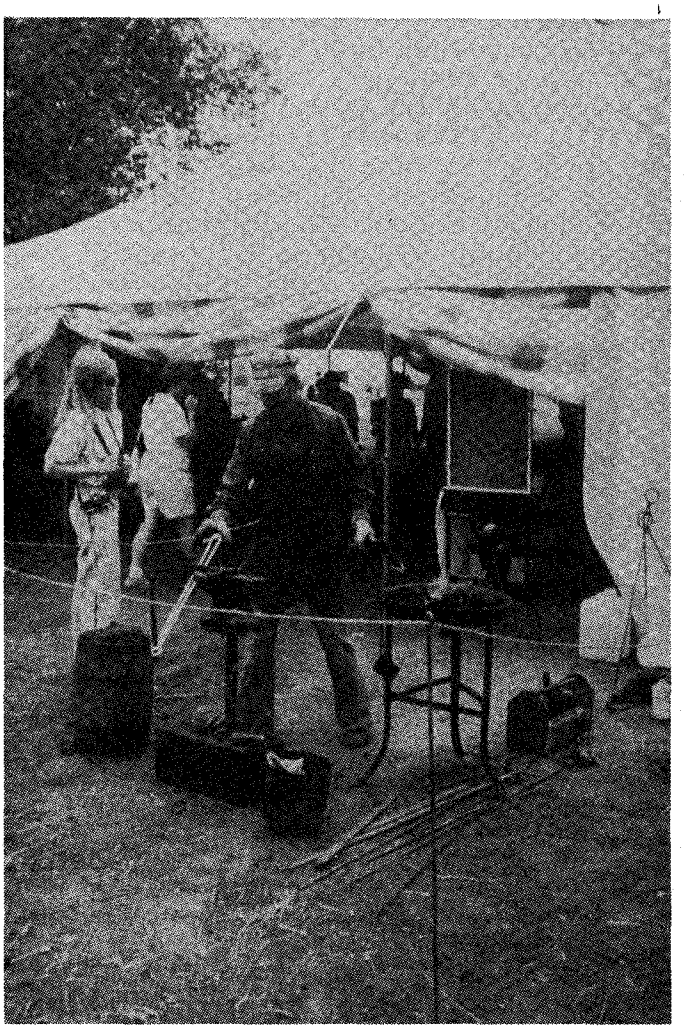

Both: Author's Photos

Left: At the mountain man camp, some visitors even get to try their hand at firing the black powder guns. Right: A blacksmith demonstrates his trade.

The state built a broom workshop on the grounds in 1892, ostensibly because it was healthier for the inmates to keep busy. It may also have been because the lessee got to keep prisoners' wages as part of his profits. Soon, local and area businesses began complaining about the unfair competition from cheap inmate labor.

When Wyoming took over from the territorial government, it leased the prison to private operators. The state paid the contractor a flat fee per inmate. The lessee had to provide the necessary services. If the state payment was more than costs he made a profit; if not, he lost money.

One thing that didn't change under state control was the controversy over prison labor. The state built a broom workshop on the grounds in 1892, ostensibly because it was healthier for the inmates to keep busy. It may also have been because the lessee got to keep prisoners' wages as part of his profits. Before long, local and area businesses began complaining about the unfair competition from cheap inmate labor. Unions from as far away as Denver pressured businessmen not to sell brooms made by the Wyoming convicts.

The workshop, known as the broom factory, became a horsebarn under university ownership and is also slated for restoration. Some of the original broom-making equipment has been located. The warden's quarters, built by convicts in 1875, has been remodeled and expanded and will also be part of the historical complex.

The idea to restore the prison to a living history museum came, ironically, from an official of the University of Wyoming who was assigned to a chamber of commerce committee as a kind of watchdog. Dr. Frank Hinds formerly oversaw the prison site while working with the university's animal science department. When assigned to "keep an eye" on a local committee interested in stabilizing the old building and perhaps turning it into a park, Hinds remembered his love of living history and asked if the group had discussed the concept.

"It was like an idea whose time had come," Hinds said. His plan was popular and is now backed by a non-profit corporation which hired a director away from the popular southern California attractions of the Queen Mary and Spruce Goose. Voters approved two sales tax elections to fund the project. Exterior work on the prison building is nearly complete. Interior work and other first phase elements will also be ready for next summer's opening. Completion of all elements of the park is planned for 1994.

Living history tableaux will include a

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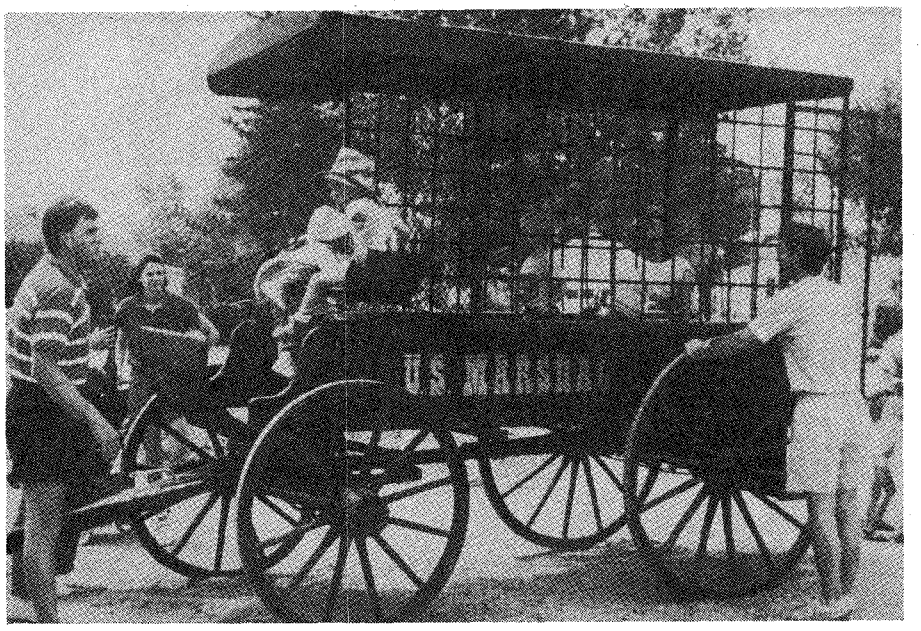
fur traders' rendezvous, Plains Indian camp, end-of-tracks town, tie hack camp (where railroad ties are hand hewn from native lumber), and military post. A rotation of these museums-without-walls is planned to keep the park fresh. Greenbelt areas on the Laramie River will encompass a natural history trail and a Victorian hotel will house an opera house-theater and dance hall.

GENERAL MANAGER Craig Post says no attraction can be complete without entertainment, ". . . a carnival or something like it. But nobody wanted to mar our authentic historical centerpiece with roller coasters and iron rides." The planners decided to create a carnival like the many that roamed the frontier in the late nineteenth century. Post says they plan to make the carnival feel like it "just hit town yesterday and will be gone tomorrow."

The search for historical accuracy was what convinced Jeff Hauff to leave his post with the Wyoming Archives, Museums and Historical Department and join the corporation. Post left the Disney organization for the opportunity to create a new kind of attraction, one based on "history as it was, not as Hollywood imagined it or as some park designer dreamed it." An advisory board of citizens, including famed Wyoming historian T.A. Larson, works closely with the planners, consultants, and administrative staff.

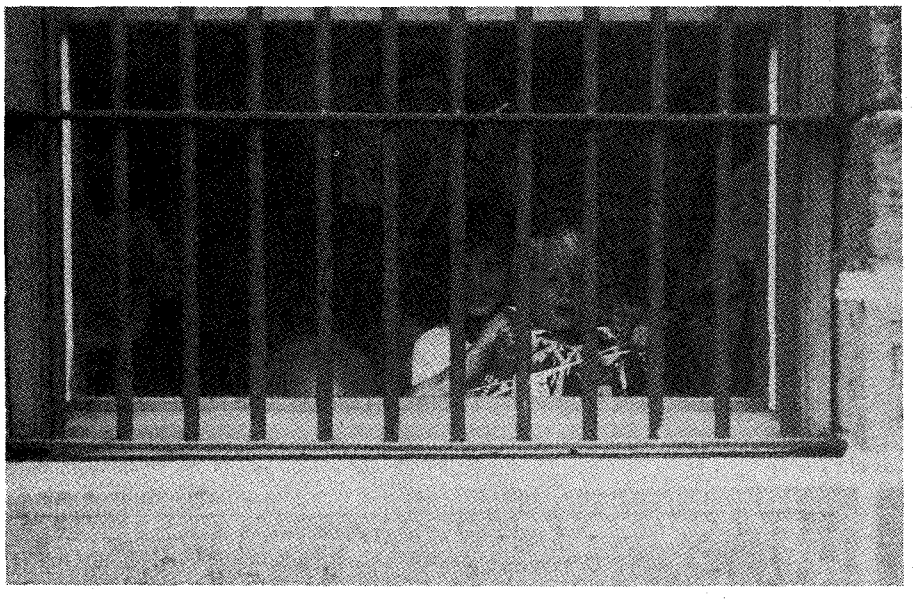
No project of this scope can exist without government cooperation. The state highway department is already constructing new ramps and redesigning roads surrounding the park to handle the expected half-million vehicles a year. The Wyoming Travel Commission matched local funds for an informational brochure, the Economic Development and Stabilization Board approved a grant for park planning, and the legislature itself approved state park status for the historic site, as well as loans backed by sales tax revenues.

Public support is also vital to the project. A support group called the Wyoming Territorial Prison Pen Pals involves the general public and helps raise private funds. A twenty-dollar donation can land backers on the "chain gang" where an escalating ladder of donations earns one the title of jailbird, convict, prisoner, inmate, felon, outlaw, or lifer. Those who aspire to the outlaw and lifer categories but do not have the $500 and $1,000 donations in hand may be put on parolee status and pay in four annual installments. Southern Wyoming residents have lined up solidly behind the museum-park project. A turnout of 13,000 (more than twice the expected number) at the preview opening in July and a long waiting list of volunteers and potential workers show great community support. Many of those people will be in historic costume at the Wyoming Territorial Park. They may be living the role of a fur trader, clerk in the general store, or frontier soldier. Visitors may also see them recreating the life of a prisoner, spending time making brooms, shoes, bricks, or bridles just like Butch Cassidy may have done almost one hundred years ago.



Author's Photo

Part of a frontier law enforcement fleet, borrowed from the U.S. Marshal's office in Cheyenne.



Author's Photo

From the outside looking in at visitors in the exhibit hall, which occupies part of the south cellblock.

Laramie, site of the Wyoming Territorial Penitentiary and surrounding park, is on Interstate 80 in south-central Wyoming.

Details on the Wyoming Territorial Park may be obtained by writing P.O. Box 1631, Laramie, Wyoming 82070, or phone (307) 745-6161.

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An Unlikely Power Struggle

By JUDY R. REIS

Geronimo was mad. The Chiricahuas were acting as if they thought George Wratten, their interpreter, was their headman. Geronimo had asked the army to hire Wratten in 1886 at Fort Bowie, Arizona Territory. Now, eight years later, he wanted Wratten fired.

It was unfortunate. Wratten had helped the Chiricahuas greatly as the army sent them from Fort Bowie to San Antonio, then on to Forts Pickens and Marion in Florida. But now the tribe had been reunited at Mt. Vernon Barracks in Alabama, and Geronimo thought Wratten was more trouble than he was worth.

Fort Sill Museum

George M. Wratten and Ahnandia, Apache prisoner of war and former warrior who surrendered with Geronimo, at Fort Pickens, Florida, circa 1887.

Geronimo informed the barracks commander of his decision to fire Wratten. The commander told Geronimo the decision was not his to make. Wratten may have been hired at his suggestion but Wratten worked for the army, not for Geronimo. All he could do was ask for a hearing to voice his complaints.

How did George Wratten, a civilian employee of the army, end up in a power struggle with Geronimo? It began in 1879 when Wratten's father suffered financial reverses and moved his family from California to Florence, Arizona Territory, a town young Wratten found dull. With nothing to do, Wratten left home and headed for nearby Globe.

Globe was near the San Carlos Indian Reservation, and Wratten found it a far livelier place than Florence. He also found a job that piqued his interest. A new post store was opening on the reservation. The owners were looking for a clerk and Wratten decided he wanted the job. Wratten was only fourteen years old, but he looked much older and had little trouble convincing the owners of the store that he could do the job.

Life at San Carlos was not as exotic as Wratten had expected. It was a desolate place with no shade and swarms of bugs. Wratten was appalled to see Indians treated more like cattle than people, but the town intrigued him. He decided to stay.

In his position as post clerk he was in constant contact with the Apaches. He liked the people he met and immediately began learning their language. He learned quickly and became fluent in several Apache dialects, which even the Apaches thought he spoke well.

The Apaches seemed to like Wratten as much as he liked them. He was honest and friendly and genuinely respected them. About a year after his arrival at San Carlos the Apaches adopted him into the tribe.

Wratten earned the respect of the army, too. His facility with the Apache language and his Indian friends impressed officers. In 1881, despite his youth, the army appointed him a chief of Indian scouts.

In those early days at San Carlos Wratten and Geronimo had little contact with one another. Geronimo was an important Apache; Wratten was just another Anglo. But when Geronimo fled back into Mexico after surrendering to Gen. George Crook in March 1886, their lives became intertwined.

Gen. Nelson Miles soon replaced

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Crook. Miles tried to recapture Geronimo's band with traditional army tactics but failed. By July he decided to revert to Crook's tactics and sent a small detachment of cavalry and Indian scouts under Lt. Charles B. Gatewood to find the Chiricahuas.

Wratten was in Albuquerque on leave and Gatewood met him there and asked him to join the search. He knew Wratten's help would be invaluable. Wratten was not only an excellent interpreter; the Chiricahuas trusted him, and one of Geronimo's warriors was Wratten's blood brother, Ahnandia.

Gatewood trailed Geronimo into Mexico. When Gatewood finally found him, Geronimo said he wanted to surrender directly to General Miles. Geronimo proposed that his brother, Perico, and George Wratten go to Fort Bowie and ask Miles for a meeting. Gatewood agreed but shortly after Wratten and Perico left, word came that Miles wanted to meet with Geronimo at Skeleton Canyon. Wratten rejoined the group there.

Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum, Library Collection

C.S. Fly's caption to this photo reads, "Geronimo and Natches mounted, Natches with hat on; son of Geronimo standing by his side. This group was taken by special request of Geronimo."

After Geronimo formally surrendered to Miles, the army rounded up the small band of Chiricahuas and took them to Fort Bowie. The army regarded the Apaches as prisoners of war and prepared to send them to Florida. Many people wanted them killed instead and many of the prisoners feared for their lives. To know what was going on, Geronimo needed someone he could trust who spoke both Apache and English.

Geronimo immediately thought of George Wratten. Would he accompany the Apaches to Florida as their interpreter? Wratten would and, at age twenty-one, he accepted the job that would last the rest of his life.

After a brief stay at Fort Bowie the army loaded the Chiricahuas on a train bound for Florida. They did not get that far, at least not on the first try. At San Antonio the train stopped. The Apaches were ordered off the train and into the unfinished San Antonio Barracks. No one seemed to know why they were stopping there.

Life at the barracks was tense. Mobs of people came to stare at the Apaches, who feared they were going to be killed. Nobody knew what would happen next and Wratten tried to find out. He repeatedly questioned the officers in charge, but their only answer was that they were awaiting orders from Washington.

The situation looked as suspicious to Wratten as it did to the Chiricahuas. He thought the army might shoot the Apaches and make it look as though they had been killed trying to escape. The thought of the army gunning down unarmed Indians sickened Wratten, and he told Geronimo he would try to get the Apaches some weapons so they could at least make a fight of it if soldiers attacked them. Quietly, Wratten gathered all the rifles and ammunition he could get his hands on and hid them in his tent. No attack came and five weeks later soldiers loaded everyone back on the train, which headed off once more for Florida.

When the Chiricahuas arrived in Florida, the army separated their families. Women and children joined other Chiricahua prisoners at Fort Marion. Geronimo, the rest of his men, and George Wratten went to Fort Pickens where the trouble between Geronimo and Wratten began.

Fort Pickens had been vacant for many years and was in disrepair. Wratten encouraged the prisoners to clean the place up and make it livable. He also advised them to make the best of the situation because the more cooperative they were the sooner they would be reunited with their families. Geronimo, however, thought such work was beneath him and complained to anyone who would listen. The other Apaches argued that Wratten's advice made more sense to them, under the circumstances, than did Geronimo's complaints.

Wratten's importance to the Chiricahuas increased when the army made him a supervisor of the Apaches. Moreover, the Chiricahuas discovered that Wratten could contact others outside the fort. On several occasions he petitioned Washington officials on behalf of individuals at Fort Pickens saying many of the men had never been part of Geronimo's band or, like Ahnandia, had only joined Geronimo because they thought they were in danger at San Carlos. Wratten asked that they be allowed to join their families at Fort Marion. The war department denied the petitions but the Chiricahuas realized that Wratten's willingness to write letters in their behalf could stand them in good stead. Geronimo, however, was beginning to have mixed feelings about George Wratten.

In 1887 Wratten's advice that the Fort Pickens prisoners be cooperative paid off—their families were allowed to join them. At the same time the rest of the Chiricahuas at Fort Marion were moved to Mt. Vernon Barracks in Alabama where they were not so closely confined. Life was getting a little better.

Still the prisoners at Fort Pickens felt betrayed. They had met the terms of their surrender with General Miles, but the army showed no signs of keeping its promises. What had happened to Gen. D.S. Stanley's promise that they would be at Fort Pickens for only a year? And what about General Miles' promise that they would be reunited with all their relatives and be given some good land to farm?

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Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum, Sweet Collection

A group of Apaches in Mexico during the 1886 peace negotiations. Photo by C.S. Fly.

The Chiricahuas turned to Wratten for the answers. He could write letters to Washington and find out if officials there intended to keep those promises.

Instead of writing to Washington, Wratten wrote General Stanley, reminding him of the promises made to the Chiricahuas. Stanley did not answer. Not knowing what to say, he left the letter on his desk for three months. Then he passed the buck, and the letter, to his superiors. But he did add a recommendation: let the Apaches at Fort Pickens rejoin the rest of their tribe at Mt. Vernon Barracks.

In May 1888, Geronimo and his fellow prisoners, along with George Wratten, were moved to Mt. Vernon Barracks. Wratten's letter had gotten results.

Mt. Vernon Barracks was in the pine woods. The soil was poor and the Chiricahuas found it gloomy, buggy, and damp. The army, however, considered it a healthy place and thought it contained enough acreage for the Apaches to learn agriculture and become self-supporting.

About 300 Chiricahuas were already at Mt. Vernon Barracks when Geronimo and Wratten arrived. They were building cabins and constructing roads. They were also dying at an alarming rate from tuberculosis and dysentery. No one but the army thought Mt. Vernon Barracks was a good place for the Chiricahuas, and Indian rights activists were already urging their removal to a more suitable spot.

Suitable or not, Mt. Vernon Barracks was an unhappy place. In addition to the other problems, the children had been shipped off to the Carlisle Indian school. As soon as Wratten arrived, parents begged him to find out what had happened to their children.

Wratten wrote more letters and found the answers disturbing: the children were dying from tuberculosis, too. Most of them had been farmed out to work for families living near the school, and the school took their wages. Only fourteen children actually remained at the school.

Wratten was incensed. He fired off letters to Washington and to Indian rights activists. Why could the children not be educated at Mt. Vernon Barracks, where they could be with their parents who loved them and needed them?

Wratten's letters brought about some improvement. A few children, all of them quite ill, were returned to their parents and the Indian rights people were allowed to start a school at the barracks.

Unfortunately, Wratten's efforts to help the children not only reinforced Geronimo's view of him as a rival, they incurred the wrath of Richard Henry Pratt, Carlisle's superintendent. Pratt said Wratten was a troublemaker who cared nothing about the welfare of the children and only wanted to make himself look important. Pratt demanded that the army fire Wratten.

Pratt's demand was refused. As far as the army was concerned Wratten was doing an excellent job. They found him invaluable in translating the needs and worries of the Chiricahuas. He prevented trouble; he didn't cause it.

Geronimo, however, agreed with Pratt that Wratten was a troublemaker. Geronimo was regaining his influence with the Chiricahuas and had shown that he carried some weight when the army appointed him justice of the peace to hear minor charges. The Apaches still paid more attention to Wratten, and on top of that, Wratten had once arrested Geronimo for drunkenness, a charge that landed him in the guardhouse. By 1894 Geronimo decided things had gone far enough. Wratten had to be replaced.

Geronimo's plan hit a snag when the army explained that Wratten worked for them and all he could do was request a hearing. Geronimo saw it as needless army bureaucracy, but he wanted to get rid of Wratten. He asked for the hearing.

During the hearing Geronimo displayed a good understanding of what the army thought was important. He kept quiet about his real reasons for wanting to get rid of Wratten and, instead, he and his friends testified that Wratten mistreated them. Wratten would not listen to their concerns, they said. He told them to shut up. He had even kicked an Apache woman.

Wratten admitted that he occasionally told someone to shut up, but it was the only way to get anything done. The Apaches would just keep talking until they were tired if nobody made them get to the point. He denied that he had ever mistreated, kicked, or

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struck an Apache woman.

The officers decided in Wratten's favor. They concluded that they did not know of "a single instance of harsh treatment" that Wratten committed. If anything, he was too lenient. They also praised him for his honesty, patience, and reliability.

Geronimo thought Wratten had made a fool of him during the hearing and caused him to lose face among the Chiricahuas. He never forgave him.

Shortly after the hearing the army acted on the many recommendations for the removal of the Chiricahuas. They moved them from the humid gloom of Mt. Vernon Barracks to the sunny, open lands of Fort Sill in Indian Territory. Fort Sill was not home but it was getting closer.

At Fort Sill each family received a ten-acre allotment. Capt. H.L. Scott, who was in charge of the Chiricahuas' removal, asked Wratten's advice on dividing the land. Wratten suggested that the tribe be organized into small groups based on family affiliations and each group be assigned to its own village with its own headman. Scott agreed and asked Wratten to choose the headmen. The men he chose were all recognized leaders and included Geronimo. Geronimo accepted the position but not the gesture of friendship.

Wratten continued to work as the supervisor of the Indians and as one of their interpreters. Geronimo kept trying to undermine his influence with the tribe. When General Miles came to inspect Fort Sill, Geronimo complained that Wratten gave him work that was too hard for a man his age and asked if he could be excused from further work details. Miles assented and afterward Geronimo gloated at not having to obey Wratten's orders.

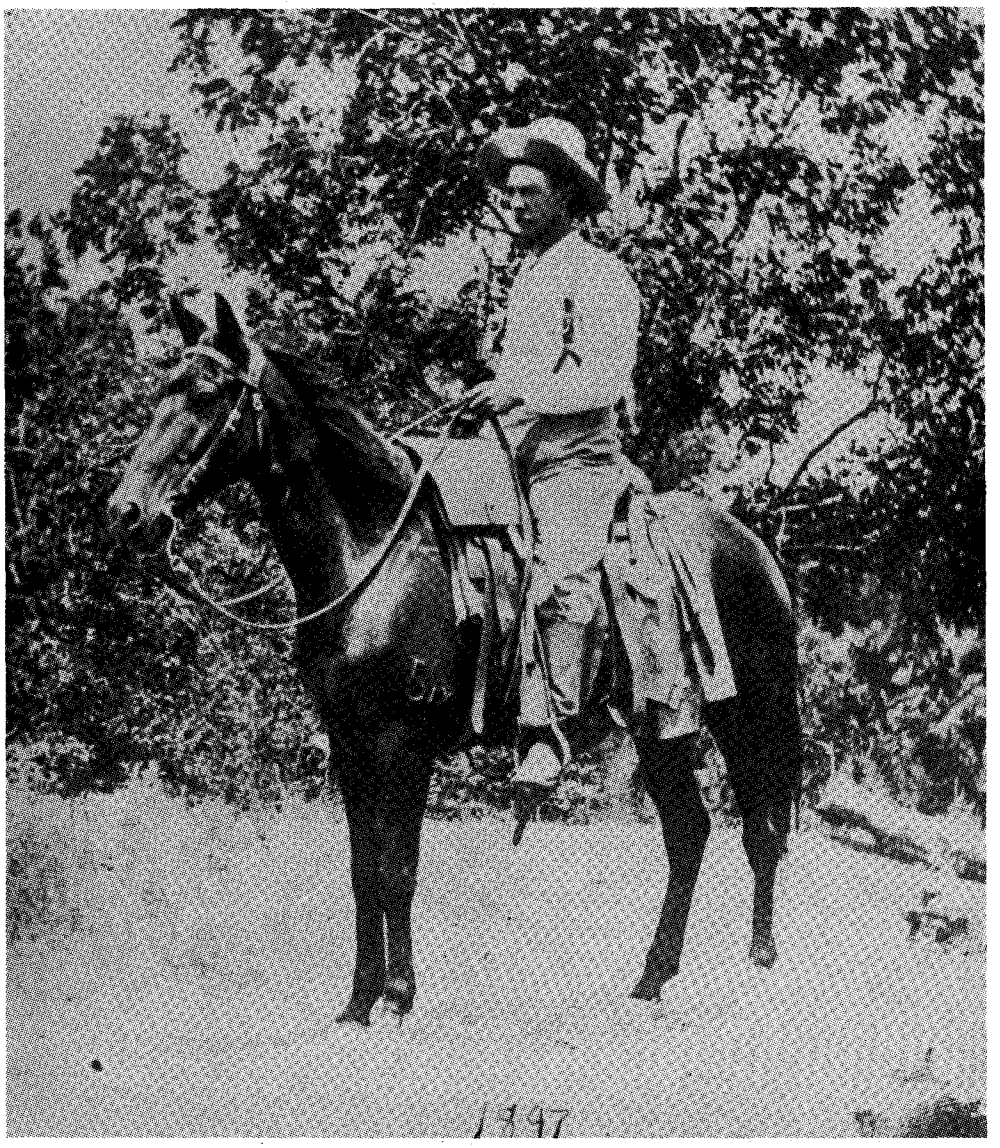
Wratten resented all the publicity Geronimo received. Still, Wratten often accompanied Geronimo when the Apache appeared as a popular part of national exhibitions. Geronimo did not seem to mind Wratten's company on those occasions, perhaps because Wratten was merely the interpreter. But when Geronimo dictated his memoirs to S.M. Barrett he claimed Wratten had mistreated the Apaches and, as a consequence, had a great deal of trouble with them. He said it had gotten so bad that an Apache had knifed Wratten; however, the incident Geronimo referred to involved an interpreter named Sam Bowman, not George Wratten.

In 1908 Wratten resigned his post. He was tired of wrangling with Geronimo, and his wife wanted to go home to Alabama, where their children could grow up in more "civilized" surroundings. They returned to Mt. Vernon, where Wratten farmed and ran a few cattle. Wratten was not successful and he did not get along with the southern gentry. In 1910 he decided to return to Fort Sill. The army wanted him back at his old job, and his old nemesis, Geronimo, had died the year before. Fort Sill was where he belonged.

Wratten was in poor health, though. He had contracted tuberculosis during his years at Mt. Vernon Barracks and it had settled in his spine. An operation did not help. Wratten was weak and in a great deal of pain, but he continued working as the Indians' supervisor until he could no longer get out of bed. Then he had a tent put up in his front yard, and every day he was carried there so he could continue working as an interpreter.

It was a busy time for the Chiricahuas, and Wratten's services were much in demand. Congress was considering bills that would free the Chiricahuas from their prisoner-of-war status and give them the option of remaining at Fort Sill on their allotments or going to the Mescalero Apache Reservation in New Mexico.

Wratten thought it sounded like more empty talk. Nothing had come of it in the past; nothing would come of it now. But Wratten was wrong. This time the legislation passed on August 24, 1912, but the Chiricahuas were not actually freed until 1913, in part because Congress continued to wrangle over the matter. It was not soon enough for Wratten, though. He died on June 23, 1912, believing the Chiricahuas were in for another disappointment.



Fort Sill Museum

George Wratten, interpreter and overseer of Fort Sill Apaches, ready for daily tour of inspection.

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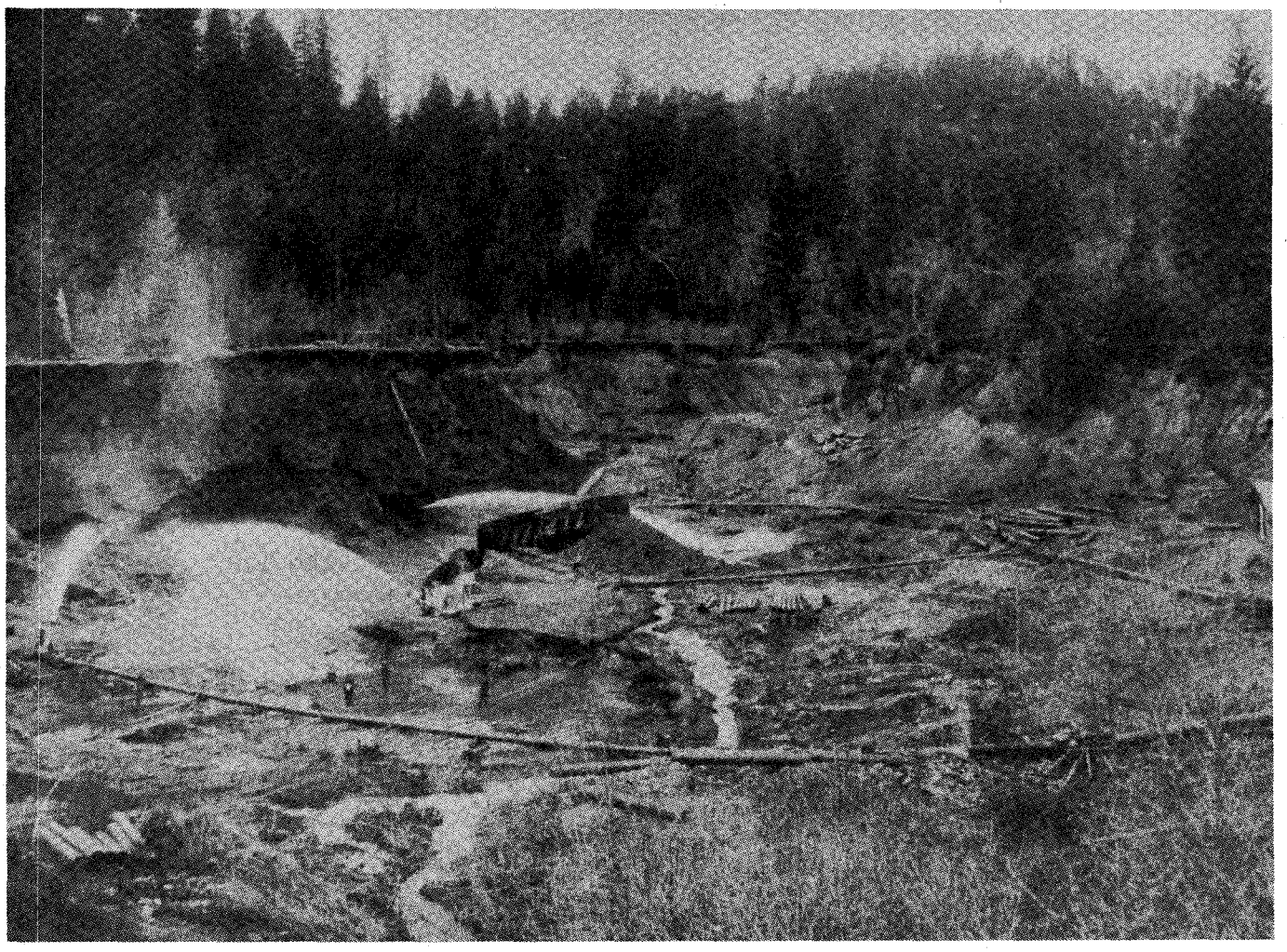
GIN LIN
Chinese Gold King

By GARY MEIER

After the historic discovery in the stream of Sutter's Mill in 1848, reports of "Gold in California!" spread worldwide. News of the bonanza reached China by fast clippers engaged in the Far East trade, and soon the Chinese were referring to America's west coast as *Gum Shan,* the "Hills of Gold." Hoping to alleviate lives of poverty in their homeland, hordes of men from China sailed west across the Pacific to seek golden fortunes. The tide of immigration would last for over two decades.

One of those Oriental argonauts was a kindly, farseeing man named Gin Lin, who was destined for much greater wealth than were most of his fellows. He was to become Oregon's Chinese gold king.

The China that Gin Lin fled in the mid-nineteenth century was a land of terrible living conditions. It had long been torn by civil and foreign wars, including the devastating Taiping Rebellion of 1850, a religious uprising that weakened the Chinese empire and caused millions of deaths. The economy was at rock botton; the country was overpopulated; and most unskilled laborers and peasants found it almost impossible to eke out a living. In the midst of that turmoil and hardship, thousands of Chinese men, young and old, indebted themselves for passage and expenses to California.



Southern Oregon Historical Society

Gin Lin's Palmer Creek diggings yielded rich values in gold but eroded the landscape.

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Most of the Chinese who came to this country expected to work for a short time in the goldfields, build a stake, and return home with the means to benefit their families and communities. They became known as "sojourners," temporary residents of America who neither desired nor intended to remain permanently on foreign soil. Though some sojourners did acquire money and returned to China better off than when they left, many did not. Thousands were forced by circumstances of prejudice and prohibitive laws to work as poorly paid laborers for white mine owners and railroad companies, never accumulating enough to return home, ending their days in dismal shantytowns.

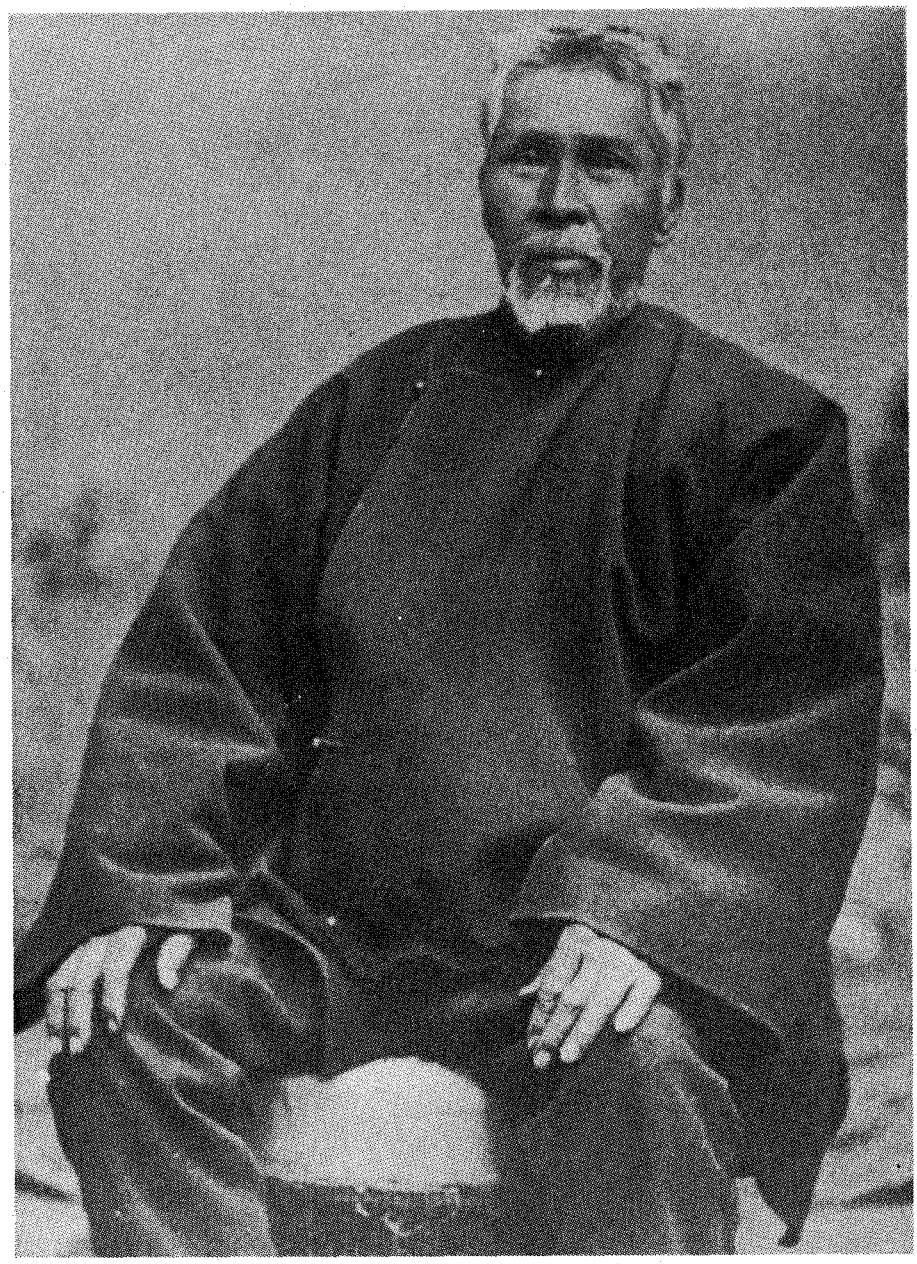
AMONG the more fortunate Chinese sojourners were a few who, through diligence, imagination, and luck, rose to great wealth and position in the American West. Such a man was Gin Lin.

When Gin Lin arrived in the California gold country is not known for certain, but he was part of the movement of Chinese miners who came north to Oregon following the rich 1852 gold strikes near Jacksonville in the Siskiyou Mountains.

Life for the Chinese in Oregon was no easier than it had been in the gold camps of California's Sierra foothills. Of all the miners from foreign lands, the Chinese most often raised the hackles of native-born, white miners and townspeople. Hated for their color, misunderstood and scorned for their unfamiliar and mysterious ways, the men in strange clothing and conical straw hats were held in contempt and frequently abused. They were commonly victimized by gun-toting thugs who found great sport in cutting off their pigtails. Killing an Oriental was not considered much of a crime. Once a drunken white miner shot and killed a Chinese on the main street of Jacksonville without reason. He was tried and fined a few dollars for shooting a gun within the city limits.

Few whites bothered to learn Chinese names. They were simply "pigtails" or "chinks," and in many court and other public records they were named only as "John Chinaman." Amid this environment of hatred and distrust, Gin Lin arrived in Jacksonville shortly after 1852.

What set Gin Lin apart from his fellow sojourners was his unusual poise and intelligence and the much-needed service that he brought to the boom camp. Earlier in California, after working in the mines for a time, Gin Lin had established himself as a labor broker, a Chinese "boss," supplying workers for the white mine owners. Orientals were prohibited from locating their own claims, but could purchase them from other miners. Most newly arriving sojourners, though, had not the money to buy a claim on their own or even in small groups. So many of them contracted to a Chinese boss, farming themselves out, through him, to white mine owners while hoping to accumulate enough money to purchase their own claims. The advantage of contracting with a fair, honest boss like Gin Lin was that the workers were much more likely to be paid regularly and to receive their proper wage. An employer would periodically pay a lump sum to the Chinese boss, who would then pay the workers. The boss was also a protector of sorts, ensuring fair treatment of his men by the mine owners.



Southern Oregon Historical Society

Gin Lin, Oregon's Chinese gold king, circa 1885.

Jacksonville needed Gin Lin because the mine operators required dependable, cheap labor. For with all the scorn and derision heaped on the sojourners, it was well-known that they had a real penchant for hard work. They were wiry and strong, and they were dependable, tireless, and industrious.

During his first few years in Jacksonville, Gin Lin won the grudging respect of many whites and was treated with open friendliness by a number of pioneer Oregon businessmen, including the territory's first banker, Cornelius Beekman; cabinetmaker David Linn; and famed photographer Peter Britt, who posed Gin Lin for photographs in his

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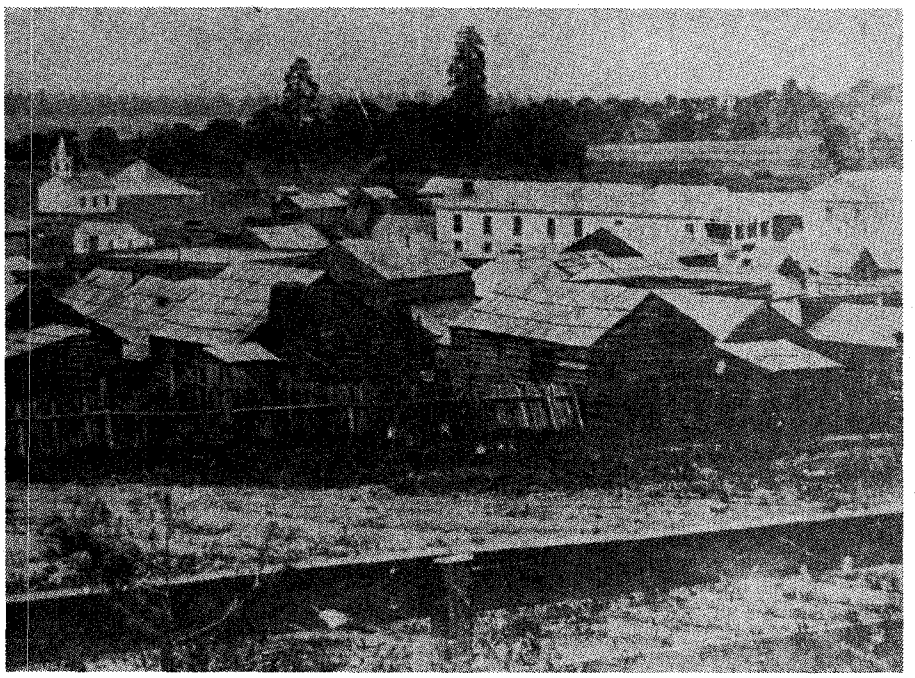

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Jacksonville in the mid-1850s. The cabins in the foreground were part of the Chinese district, where Gin Lin recruited workers.

studio on several occasions. Another who offered friendship was Jacksonville attorney Charles Wesley Kahler, who became Gin Lin's close friend and lawyer.

The Chinese mining boss also had the respect and trust of his men, to whom he was scrupulously fair. Often, in addition to his other duties, Gin Lin acted as an agent for one or several of his workers who had saved enough money to purchase their own small claims. He saw to it that an American attorney prepared the bill of sale and that his men were not cheated. He also ensured that they paid the outrageous county "fee" of fifty dollars per month, required only of Chinese mine operators. To fail to pay the fee meant jail. An annual two- and later four-dollar foreign miners tax was levied only against Chinese, by the territorial and, after 1859, the state government. And a poll tax assessed ". . . every Negro, Chinaman, Kanaka (Hawaiian), and Mulatto" in Oregon five dollars annually.

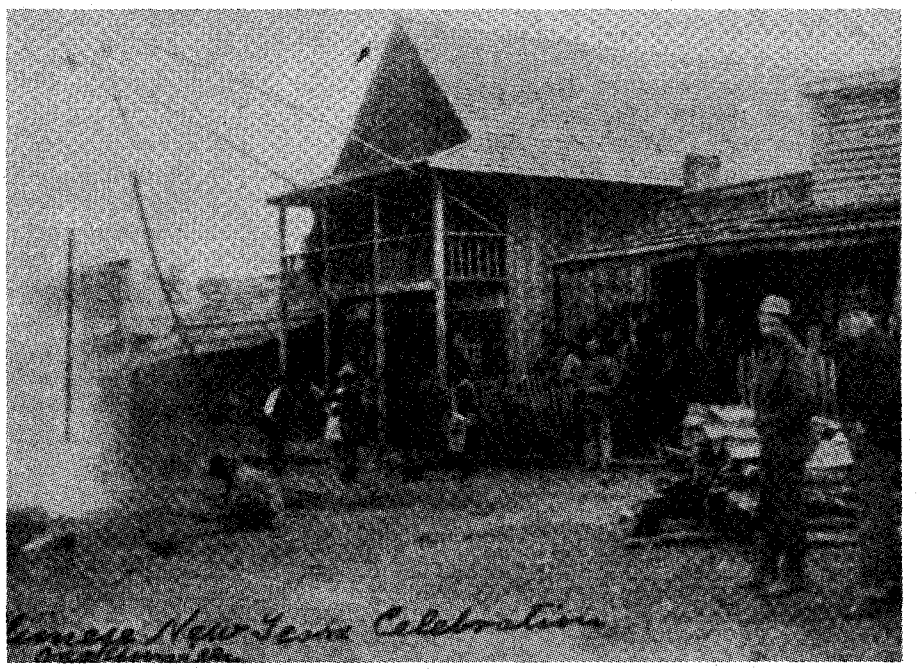
By the early 1860s Gin Lin had stashed safely in Beekman's Bank enough wealth to buy his own large-scale mining operation. Thus in 1864, the well-known Chinese labor boss became himself a mine owner, employing dozens of the same men who had previously been under contract to him. He even hired a few white miners who were down on their luck and needed work.

Gin Lin paid $900 for his first mining property, located on the Little Applegate River, and he worked it through the early 1870s, uncovering rich values in placer gold. During that time he also purchased several other sites. His men worked hard for him, probably harder than they had for their previous employers. They were able to put away their own sums, and Gin Lin's accounts in Cornelius Beekman's ledgers began showing real wealth. The mining enterprise of Gin Lin and Company, as it was formally recorded, was becoming a major factor in southern Oregon gold mining.

Gin Lin's imagination and resourcefulness led him to become the innovator of hydraulic mining in the Jacksonville area. When streamside gold deposits had been exhausted, some method had to be devised for extracting the gold in rich hillsides some distances from stream water. Hydraulic mining, first introduced in California in 1853, was the most efficient answer. And Gin Lin was the first mine operator to utilize hydraulicking in the district.

HYDRAULIC mining operated on a simple principle: if water under high pressure could be directed against a gold-laden hillside, the bank would disintegrate quickly and the dirt and gravel would wash downhill, where it could be channeled into long sluice boxes that would catch the gold in riffles. Large stones and gravel were discarded in great piles called tailings.

To provide water, Gin Lin's men hand-dug a ditch running four and a half miles from Yale Creek to his diggings. (The remains of that long trench, now known as "China Ditch," can still be seen.) The ditch water was diverted at a wooden structure called a headbox into a penstock, or tube, made of riveted pipe. The penstock ran downhill, carrying the fast flowing water through narrowing lengths of pipe until it was



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Chinese New Year celebration in Jacksonville's Chinatown, circa 1880.

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discharged through a large nozzle, referred to as a "giant." The drop in elevation from the ditch to the nozzle forced the water to such high pressure that it blasted out of the nozzle with immense power. The result was like turning a modern fire hose on a sand pile or a bank of snow. If misdirected, the jet of water could kill a man at 200 feet.

After mining many thousands of dollars in gold from his Little Applegate River diggings, Gin Lin in 1881 acquired additional claims in the nearby Palmer Creek district. There his men constructed a ditch five miles long, from high on Palmer Creek to several mining sites at lower elevations. These operations were his richest yet, and over the years he extracted a wealth of gold from them.

The remains of some of Gin Lin's Palmer Creek diggings can be seen today along the Gin Lin Trail, a marked, three-quarter-mile meander through the gulches and tailings of the Chinese gold king's most productive sites.

BY THE MID-1880s, Gin Lin had become a man of notice in Jacksonville, and the sight of him driving his buggy behind a quick-stepping horse was familiar to Jackson County residents. He was accorded the respect and friendship of the same townspeople and miners who many years before had scorned him and his fellow sojourners. He was always careful to maintain the goodwill of Jacksonville's white population. For example, he often stopped his mining operations in the Little Applegate district for short periods in the summer so that ranchers could use his ditch water for irrigating dry pastures.

Gin Lin also acquired a reputation for wives. Making occasional trips to China, he returned to Oregon with a new and younger wife each time, having given over the previous spouse to one or another of his friends. Gin Lin's petite, delicately featured wives—four in all—dressed in beautiful, traditional Chinese garments of silk and brocade, and lived well, though they may have been secretly lonesome for the country of their birth. America was a place of strange customs and people to them.

In 1885 the enterprising Chinese mining magnate bought still another large mining property near the settlement of Galice on the Rogue River in neighbor-

The Gin Lin Mining Trail

The site of Chinese mining boss Gin Lin's 1880s Palmer Creek diggings can be seen today along the Gin Lin Trail near Jacksonville, Oregon. The trail, a three-quarter-mile interpretive footpath, provides a close-up view of the exact location where a wealth of gold was taken from gulches and hillsides. Fourteen numbered stations along the trail are keyed to the information and diagrams in an eight-page brochure available at the trailhead parking lot.

The visitor first passes through an extensive pile of cobbles, or tailings, discarded from a system of sluice boxes. Sturdy Douglas fir and madrone trees now grow from the tailings. The trail then leads up a gentle slope, where evidence of Gin Lin's hydraulic mining remains; a high cut-bank is now partially grown over by shrubs and trees. A section of the trail follows the Palmer Creek Ditch, laboriously dug by Chinese workers to carry water from Palmer Creek down to the mining sites. The trail winds through more of the historic diggings, where sections of the old penstock pipe can still be seen, and eventually leads back to the starting point.

The Gin Lin Trail was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps and is now under the jurisdiction of the Rogue River National Forest. It has been designated a National Recreational Trail.

Visitors to the Gin Lin Trail also see the effects of old-time hydraulic mining. Hydraulicking occurred in a day when there was little concern for the environment. The method was outlawed before the end of the nineteenth century. Most of the scarring effects on the landscape in the Palmer Creek diggings have been softened by over a century of shrub and tree growth as nature reclaims its own.

The Gin Lin Trail is an interesting excursion into the past, back to the days of Gold Fever.

DIRECTIONS: From Oregon highway 238 at the town of Ruch (eight miles from Jacksonville), turn left (south) on Applegate Road. Go nine miles to Palmer Creek Road; turn right on Palmer Creek Road and go 7/10 mile to Flumet Flat Campground. The Gin Lin Trail is adjacent to the campground and has its own trailhead parking.

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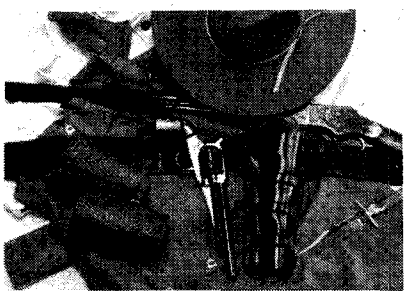

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One of Gin Lin's four wives, name unknown, formally posed for a photograph in Peter Britt's Jacksonville studio.

ing Josephine County.

Amassing a fortune through his Oregon mines, Gin Lin deposited more than a million dollars of gold in Cornelius Beekman's bank. But eventually the longing to return permanently to his homeland was too strong to ignore, and in 1897 the elderly Chinese gentleman decided to make his last trip to the Orient to retire in peaceful old age, surrounded by family and friends, and basking in success and respect. He sold most of his American holdings, retrieved his golden fortune from Beekman's bank, and said good-bye to his many Oregon friends. Then he sailed for China.

Unfortunately, the story of Gin Lin took a tragic turn, for it was soon reported to a shocked Jacksonville that when the kindly old man landed in China, about June 1, 1897, he was set upon by thieves who robbed and killed him. It was rumored in southern Oregon that before he sailed for the Orient he had hidden much of his wealth on his person. According to the story, several Oriental criminals knew of his hidden gold and attacked him when he reached China.

It was an undeserved end for a man who had struggled through many difficult years to achieve success in a strange and foreign land, where he had been known in early years simply as "John Chinaman."

True West

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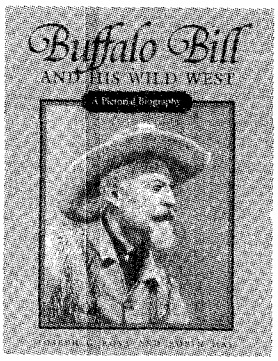

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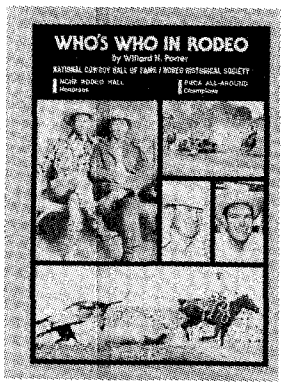

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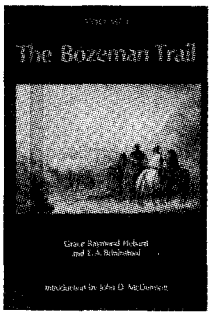

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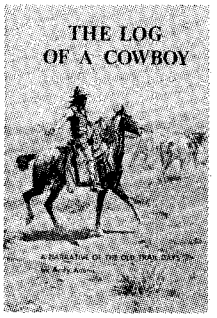

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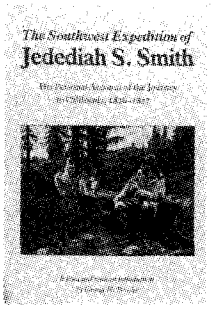

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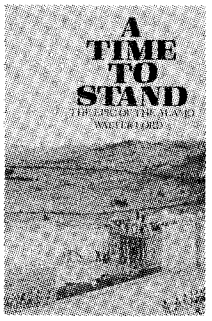

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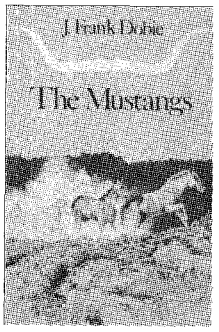

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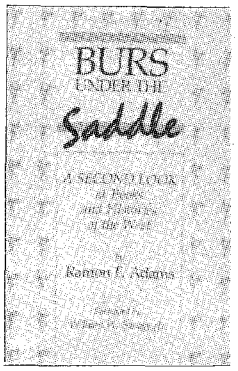

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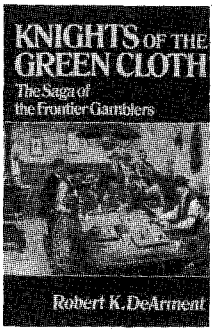

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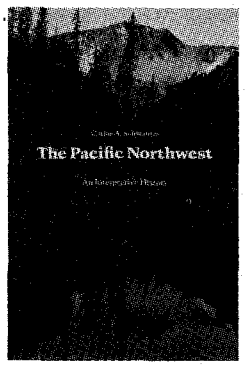

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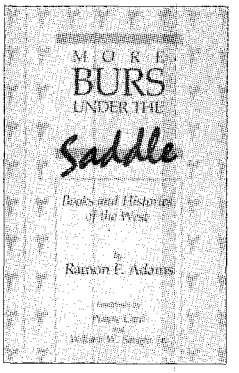

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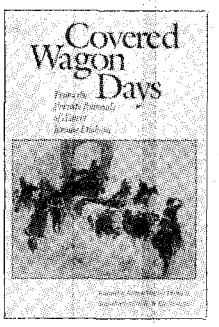

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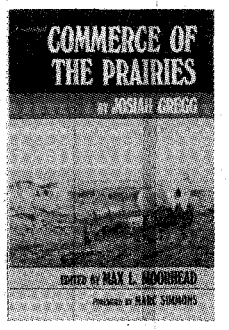

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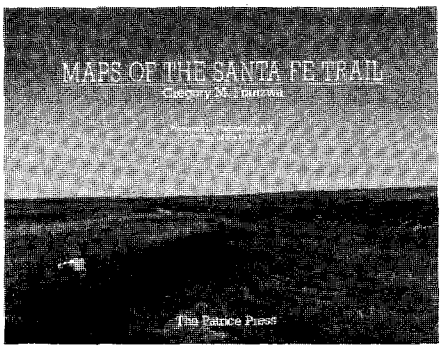

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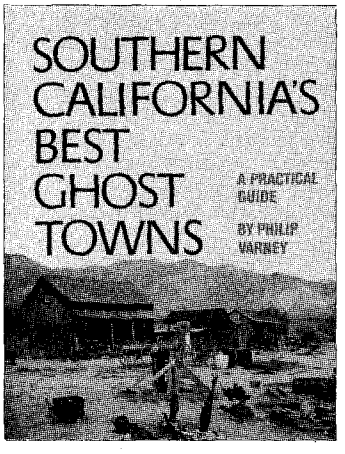

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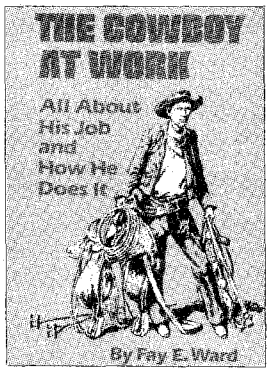

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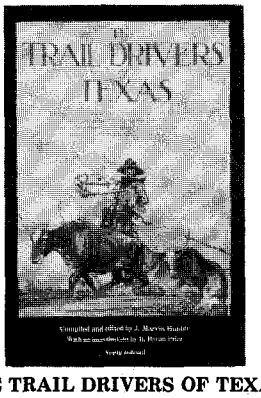

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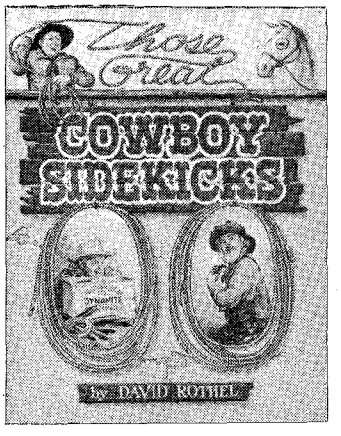

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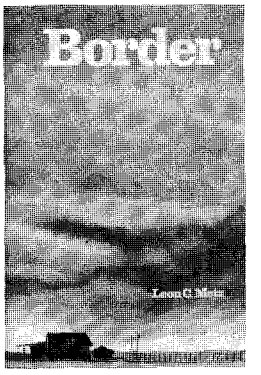

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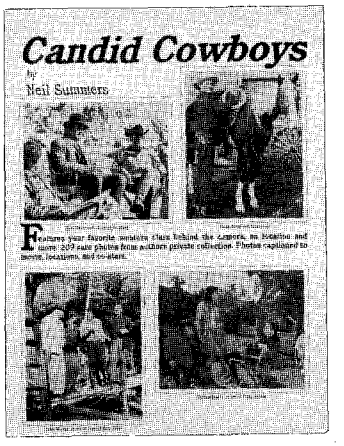

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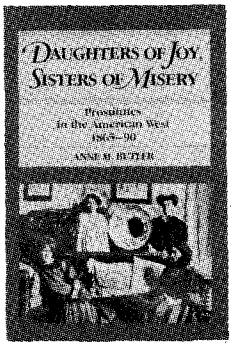

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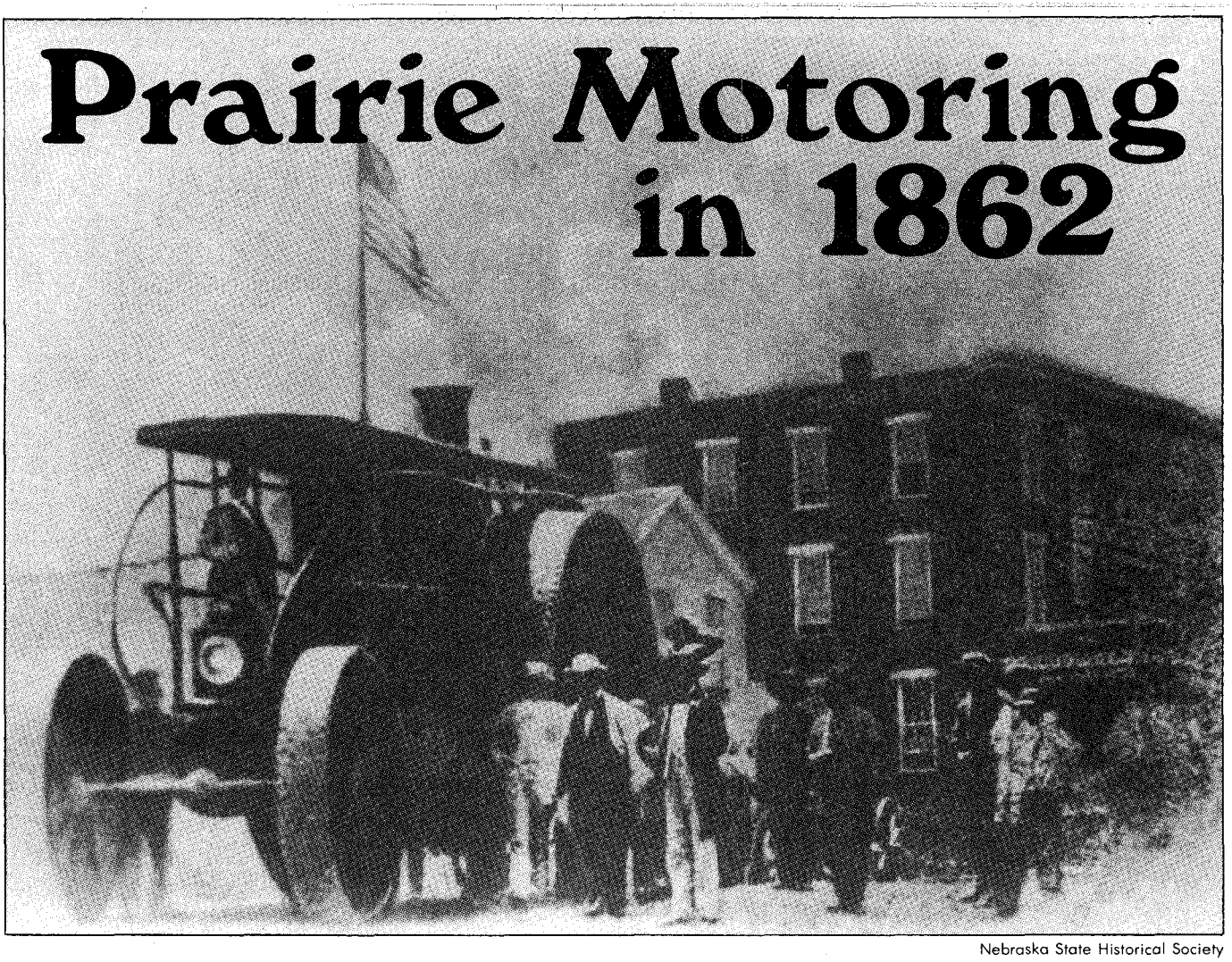
Prairie Motoring in 1862



Nebraska State Historical Society

Major Brown's monstrous invention towers over curious onlookers at downtown Nebraska City, Nebraska, on July 12, 1862. The steam wagon was touted as the first locomotive ever to pass over the soil of Nebraska.

By CHRISTIE W. MILLER

The year 1862 found the Missouri River near Nebraska City, Nebraska, churning with steamboats. Freight traffic at the town's landing seemed to surpass the lazy flow of the rambling river. On July 12, 1862, the steamer *West Wind,* operating out of St. Louis, Missouri, docked at the end of Nebraska City's Ferry Street. Rains had been prevalent, and the river swelled; its waters vacillated like the lope of a heavy-laden camel. But the high river level was a blessing, for it gave the *West Wind* additional bouyancy to carry the monstrous, fourteen-ton invention resting upon its deck.

The machine would be touted as the first locomotive engine ever to pass over the soil of Nebraska. It was the brainchild of Maj. Joseph R. Brown, Sioux Indian agent at New Ulm, Minnesota. Brown had made a contract with John A. Reed of New York City to build the machine for $9,000. At a time when the Civil War was devouring resources of both men and metal, the machine was completed in a surprisingly quick eighteen months.

Brown's invention was fashioned after traction engines that had been in use in England for several years. He had devised it as a new method of transporting freight and constructed it using his own money. He called the invention a "steam wagon" or "prairie motor."

Brown hoped to turn a profit putting the steam wagon to use in the freighting business. The Pikes Peak area, Denver, western military forts, and enterprising towns were all demanding supplies. Several freighting firms headquartered in Nebraska City at the time were monopolizing military freighting. Mollie Dorsey Sanford, a Nebraska pioneer, wrote in her diary on June 26, 1860, "They [freighters] sell their load and return in a few days [from Denver] to Nebraska for another. There is more money made freighting than any other way."

On June 28, 1862, the *Nebraska City News* listed the number of outgoing large government freight wagons. Excluding immigrant wagons, the total from May 31 to June 26, 1862, was 632. Brown believed his steam wagon could make the Nebraska City to Denver trip in seven days, twice as fast as the freighters' ox-drawn wagons.

Each of those wagons was pulled by six to twelve yoke of oxen and carried three to five tons of freight. Tests in the East had shown the steam wagon capable of hauling eight tons of freight at a steady four miles per hour. Nebraska City businessmen were optimistic about the potential profits to be gleaned from this rapid transit.

Freighters, on the other hand, were concerned. If successful, the new invention could take away their livelihood. But they also enjoyed tongue-in-cheek skepticism. After all, they were gleaning enormous profits; how much better could the existing freight system get?

A huge crowd had gathered at the landing that morning to see the iron monster. It rested quietly on the deck of the steamer like a huge frog sunning itself on the riverbank.

Surrounded by excited spectators, waiting freight wagons, and pastures of

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Author's Photo

The beginning and the end of the steam wagon. A railroad car rests near the old freighting road beside the Missouri River. The river gave birth to the steam wagon; the railroad contributed to its early demise.

grazing oxen, Brown prepared to stoke his machine. Wood and muddy river water were loaded separately into the machine's boiler. Steam was raised, and the wagon propelled itself from the deck of the steamer to the levee. Because of the muddy water, its cylinders worked with difficulty.

Gears squeaking, steam hissing, smoke and sparks belching from the smokestack, the steam wagon proceeded up Kearney Hill. Horses, dogs, and even people streaked for cover. Onlookers must have covered their ears to muffle the noise of the screeching machine.

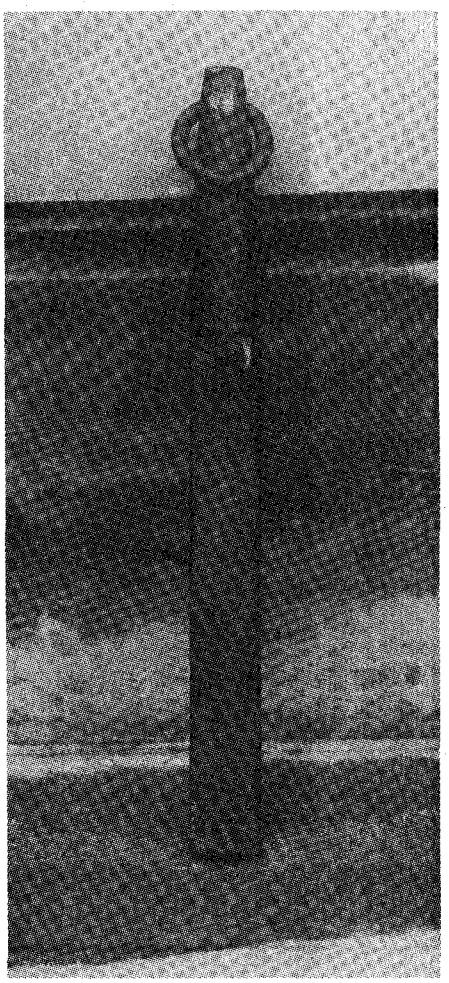
The commotion raised by the bullwhackers' waiting ox teams undoubtedly added to the excitement. The bullwhackers' angry scowls surely led mothers to do some quick lip-reading and cover the ears of their children.

Because the steam wagon was operating laboriously, it was driven up the main street and parked in front of the Seymour House. Brown proceeded to clean the engine and make minor adjustments.

The next day, crowds gathered to examine the iron giant that stood nearly fifteen feet high. The massive driving wheels stood ten feet in diameter with a ground-beating tread of eighteen inches. The front steering wheels were six feet in diameter and about sixteen inches wide. The steam wagon's front wheels were driven by oscillating cylinders connected to a shaft whose twelve-inch-in-diameter pinions attached to the wheels' inside spokes.

The machine was propelled by four ten-horsepower engines. The tank formed the body of the wagon. The boiler was an upright tube behind the driving shaft. It could carry wood and water enough to run the engine four hours. Wood was consumed at the rate of one cord per eight hours.

According to an account in the *Nebraska City News-Press,* the front driving wheels were "...guided by an apparatus similar to that of a steamboat." The machine's voracious appetite for wood and water required the services of an engineer, a fireman, and a pilot. Springs built into the rear spokes were



Nebraska State Historical Society

Part of the front axle of the steam wagon. A cylinder was believed to be the only remaining piece in existence, until the discovery of this axle in 1932.

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designed to help soften the ride—if a ride on an iron-wheeled machine could be termed "soft."

Brown's prairie motor would follow the Nebraska City-Fort Kearny Cutoff, which had been surveyed in 1860 by Augustus Harvey for the freighting firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell.

Because much of the route to Denver crossed treeless plains, Brown intended that the wood to power the engine would be cut and placed strategically along the way. How he planned to protect his fuel caches from other travelers eager for the warmth of evening campfires, he did not state. According to Brown, water for the boiler would be collected at various streams and rivers along the route.

On July 21, Major Brown invited some of Nebraska City's prominent citizens to take a ride in a freight wagon pulled by the prairie motor. One of the passengers was evidently engrossed in the excitement. He failed to notice that sparks spewing from the high, black smokestack had set fire to his straw hat. When his head began to burn a little, he quickly extinguished the flames.

On July 22, the crimson giant was prepared for its maiden journey. It was driven north of the Morton farm, its polished brass trim reflecting a hard-packed road leading some 200 miles west to Fort Kearny. According to an account in the *Nebraska City News,* the steam wagon was hitched to three wagons containing "...five tons of freight, two cords of wood, and all the wagons were crowded with excited citizens." Following as close as their terrified mounts would allow, spectators shouted encouragement. The chattering crowd had to hurry to keep up with the hissing, belching monster.

The first hill was mastered with little difficulty. Several miles under its iron wheels, the steam wagon prepared for the next steeper, but not unsurmountable, hill. Enthusiasm ran high.

Continuing west, the iron beast prepared to devour its third hill, nearly seven miles west of downtown Nebraska City. As the machine crested that last hill, the cheers of the passengers were silenced when one of the cranks of the driving shaft broke.

Brown's embarrassment can only be imagined. But his invention's failure was not his only cause for despair. The farmland where his prairie motor broke down was owned by one of his major competitors, none other than the freighting firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell. Brown's facial color surely must have matched that of his crimson beast.

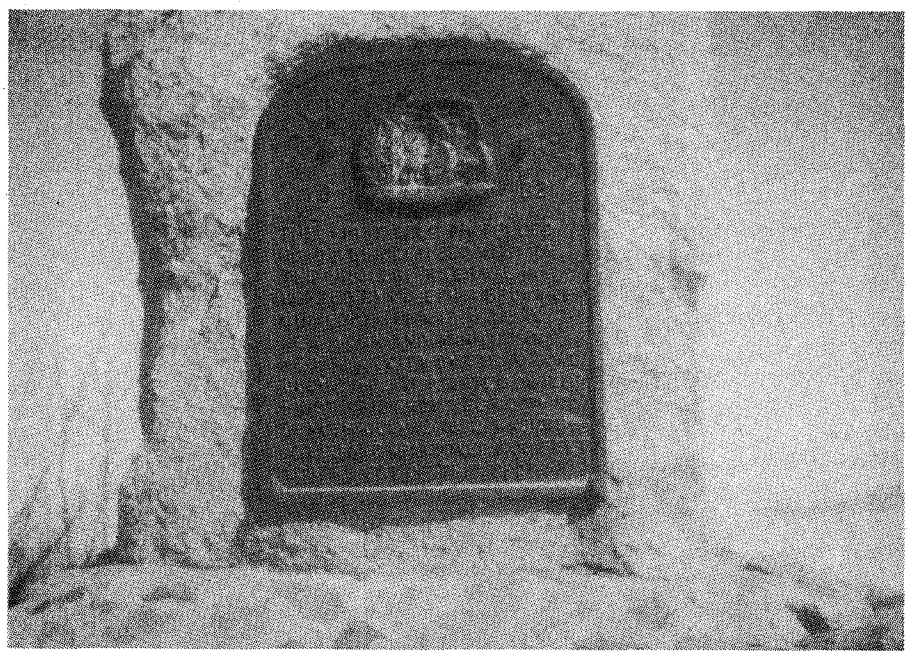
Repair parts, unfortunately, could be obtained only from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The crippled machine was left on the road, obstructing the ox-drawn wagons. Brown left Nebraska City to procure replacement parts.

On reaching his homeland, Major Brown was informed that his family had been involved in the Minnesota Indian War of 1862 and had been captured. The Indians were rising up and killing white settlers in the Minnesota River Valley. Brown stayed to help rescue his family and offer his services as Indian agent.

When the prairie motor's repair parts finally arrived at Nebraska City, it was fired up and driven back to town, where it was parked in the yard of J. Sterling Morton's home, Arbor Lodge. By then, the railroad had reached Nebraska. Although Major Brown's family was eventually released, he never returned to Nebraska. He must have realized attempts to compete with the railroad would be futile and abandoned the steam wagon.

The steam wagon remained idle at the Morton farm where, according to Kate Winslow Davis, then a neighbor to the Mortons, it "served as a magnificent playhouse" for the Winslow and Morton children. Mrs. Davis wrote that the steam wagon was used in the July 4, 1864, parade at Nebraska City. After much mechanical tinkering, the townspeople succeeded in getting it into town and down Main Street by its own power, "...but I think it had to be hauled back by horses."

Sometime after that second failure, the steam wagon was dismantled, and its engines were purchased by various manufacturing plants in the area. One Nebraska City resident reportedly took a liking to the cylinder and acquired it. It was described as "a queer looking thing [that] weighs about 65 pounds." The boiler was taken by sled to Hamburg, Iowa, where it was used in an elevator. The elevator later burned, taking the boiler with it.



Author's Photo

The steam wagon engraved on this bronze plaque is all that remains of Major Brown's dream. The plaque acknowledges the history of the ill-fated machine.

In 1914 the Nebraska State Historical Society had a granite boulder shipped to Nebraska City to mark the site of the steam wagon's journey up one of the first hills encountered on the city's streets. The monument was unveiled at a celebration on October 30.

Today that giant, sand-colored boulder stands lonely guard over the old Nebraska City train depot. It is viewed by only a few residents living high on the hill above it and by workers from a nearby meat market.

A few miles west of Nebraska City, a large crimson boulder bearing a bronze plaque marks the area where the steam wagon broke down. The farm is now owned by a local veterinarian. The pastures that once sustained oxen now nourish Angus cattle or have been converted to cropland.

The granite marker stands beside the old route once known as the Nebraska City-Fort Kearny Cutoff. Soon after the steam wagon's failure, that road was dubbed "Steam Wagon Road."

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John Sutter and the California Indians

By RICHARD PETERSON

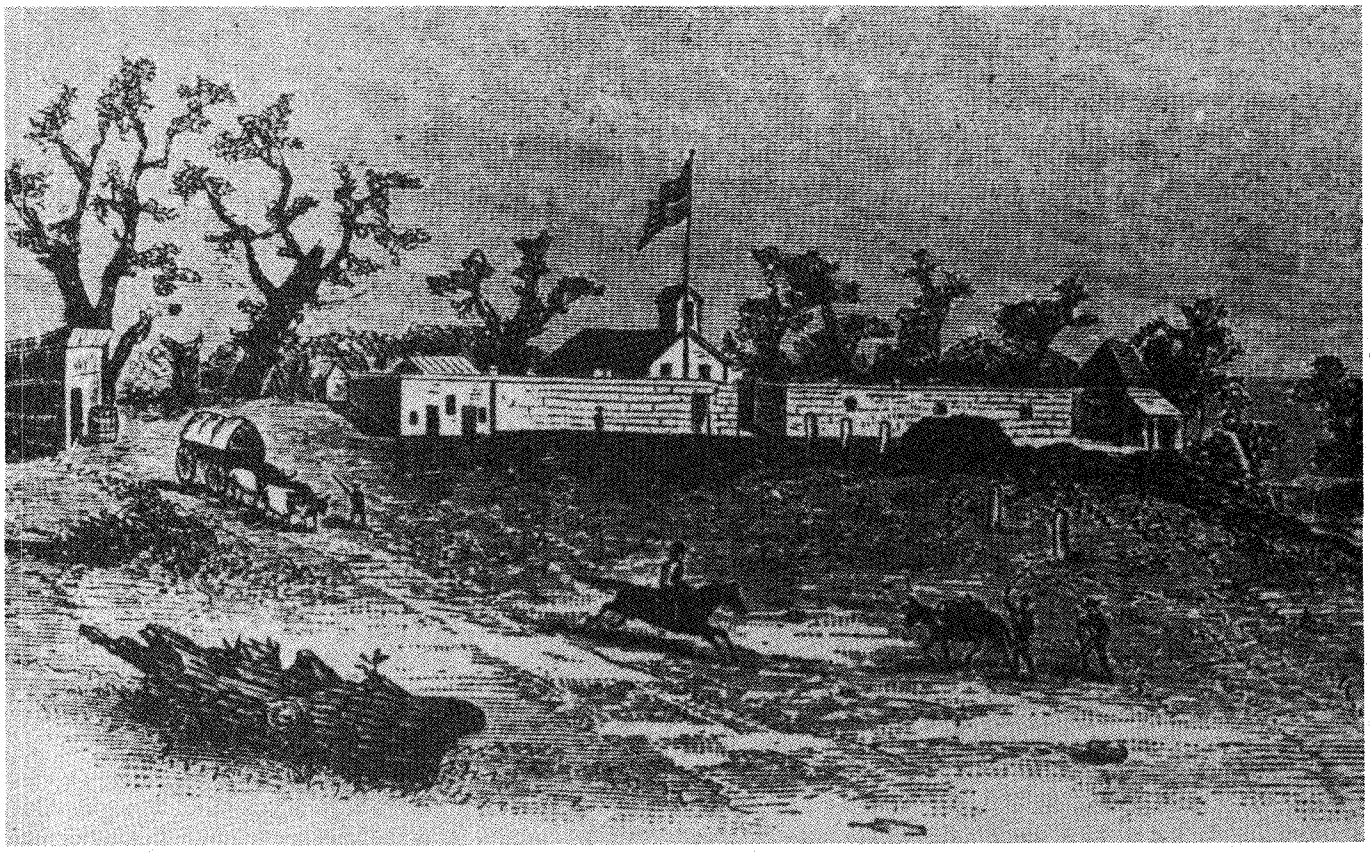
The story of Johann August Sutter, a German-Swiss merchant who fled a bad marriage and debtor's prison in Europe for a new life in the United States, is a familiar one in California history. Sutter arrived in California in 1839, convinced Gov. Juan Bautista Alvarado to grant him a private rancho of 48,400 acres near the confluence of the Sacramento and American rivers, and became a Mexican citizen to secure the deal.

With the status of a regional official, Sutter had authority to administer laws and keep the peace within his vast holdings, which he called Nueva Helvetia, or New Switzerland. Armed with those powers and operating from Sutter's Fort in present-day Sacramento, he developed a profitable trade in beaver skins and agricultural products.

The first white settler in California's great Central Valley, Sutter welcomed American overland emigrants, angering Alvarado, who had hoped Sutter would help forestall American immigration. "I was friendly with the emigrants of whom [Mexican officials] were jealous," said Sutter. "I encouraged immigration, while they discouraged it. I sympathized with the Americans while they hated them." Sutter exuded compassion for the Americans, but he also saw them as a potential source of labor for his enterprises and buyers for his land holdings.

Sutter established his rancho like a European feudal estate, reliant on Indians to tend his crops and livestock. Even though they were the backbone of his labor force, Sutter rarely extended these Indians the same hospitality that he did the Americans. His relationship with them is one of exploitation and forms a lesser-known, darker part of Sutter's story.

California's Mexican-era rancho system, just as did the Spanish mission



California Department of Parks and Recreation

A drawing of Sutter's Fort as it appeared in 1849.

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system, depended on Indian labor. Whites usually gave the Indians nothing more than shelter, food, clothing, and occasionally glass beads, for their work. Indians effectively became serfs to the rancheros who ruled as feudal lords on their great landed estates.

Sutter shrewdly allied himself with various tribes to secure a labor force, often by promising to protect them from their traditional enemy tribes. He formed an alliance in particular with Chief Narcisco, a former Christian convert who headed the Ochecames of Sacramento, as well as with other nearby Indians. Many of those allies were ex-mission converts skilled in agriculture and crafts whom Sutter used to build his fort, raise crops, catch fish, hunt for furs, and serve as soldiers against tribes Sutter suspected of horse theft and depredations against his property. The means Sutter employed to recruit and maintain his labor force, however, raise serious questions about his legendary hospitality and liberality.

California Department of Parks and Recreation

John A. Sutter.

CONTEMPORARY observers at Sutter's Fort charged that Sutter used "kidnapping, food privation, and slavery techniques" to coerce Indians into working for him. He also flattered and rewarded tribal chiefs to secure Indian laborers. Heinrich Lienhard, a Swiss employee at the fort, recalled that the chiefs "received far better pay than the poor wretches who worked as common laborers, and had to slave two weeks for a plain muslin shirt, or the material for a pair of cotton trousers." Ironically, according to historian Oscar Lewis, "instead of being worn, these items were often hung to the branches of trees to ward off evil spirits." Later Sutter paid his Indian workers in homemade tin currency pieces which they could exchange for merchandise at his store and perhaps get their money's worth.

Theodor Cordua, a Prussian rancher in nearby Marysville who originally leased land from Sutter before acquiring his own large land grant from the Mexican government, left perhaps the most damaging indictment of Sutter's Indian policy: "Those who did not want to work were considered as enemies. With other tribes the field was taken against the hostile Indians. . . . The villages were attacked usually before daybreak when everybody was asleep. Neither old nor young was spared. . . and often the Sacramento River was colored red by the blood of the innocent Indians." Although Cordua's animosity toward Sutter explains these obvious exaggerations, it is also true that Sutter was not afraid to use force against those he suspected of treachery or insubordination.

Sutter did not accord humane treatment to his Indian workers, judging from the reports of contemporaries. At night Sutter ordered the Indians penned up in corrals or locked in rooms. Lienhard described their incarceration: "As the room had neither beds nor straw, the inmates were forced to sleep on the bare floor. When I opened the door for them in the morning, the odor that greeted me was overwhelming, for

Sutter shrewdly allied himself with various tribes to secure a labor force, often by promising to protect them from their traditional enemy tribes. Many of those allies were ex-mission converts skilled in agriculture and crafts whom Sutter used to build his fort, raise crops, catch fish, hunt, and serve as soldiers.

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California Department of Parks and Recreation

James Marshall, popularly regarded as the original discoverer of California gold, despite earlier discoveries by California Hispanics.

no sanitary arrangements had been provided. What these rooms were like after ten days or two weeks can be imagined, and the fact that nocturnal confinement was not agreeable to the Indians was obvious. Large numbers deserted during the daytime, or remained outside the fort when the gates were locked."

The Indian's eating conditions also shocked visitors to the fort. In 1845, James Clyman, a Virginia-born mountain man and explorer, described mealtime for the Indians: "The Capt. [Sutter] keeps 600 or 800 Indians in a complete state of Slavery and as I had the mortification of seeing them dine I may give a short description. 10 or 15 Troughs 3 or 4 feet long were brought out of the cook room and seated in the Broiling sun. All the Labourers grate [sic] and small ran to the troughs like so many pigs and fed themselves with their hands as long as the troughs contain even a moisture."

Clyman's criticism of Sutter's Indian policy deserves special consideration because earlier he had nearly died in two separate Indian attacks in the Rocky Mountain region. His understandable dislike of Indians explains in part his decision to volunteer for service in the Black Hawk War of 1832. Thus, he could hardly have been expected to sympathize with the Indians in California or elsewhere unless their treatment was especially onerous.

Clyman's observation was not unique. Earlier, Dr. G.M. Waseurtz of Sandels, a Swedish naturalist and artist who visited Sutter in 1842, reported a similar scene: "I could not reconcile my feelings to see these fellows being driven, as it were, around some narrow troughs of hollow tree trunks, out of which, crouched on their haunches, they fed more like beasts than human beings, using their hands in hurried manner to convey to their mouths the thin porage which was served to them. Soon they . . . filed off to the fields after having, I fancy, half satisfied their physical wants." By contrast, Sutter lavishly fed his European guest an excellent breakfast of "beefsteak, tea, butter with coarse bread, eggs, beans, etc., etc."

Sutter also had a successful Indian "slave trade" operation. Noted Indian historian Jack Forbes suggests that Sutter's forces raided distant villages for captives who were then sold to rancheros near the coast, "thus supplying Sutter with perhaps his most reliable 'crop.'"

Sutter's slave trade also included the kidnapping and sale of Indian children. The reputable nineteenth-century historian and bibliophile Hubert H. Bancroft reported, "From the first he was in the habit of seizing Indian children, who were retained as servants, or slaves, at his own establishment, or sent to his friends in different parts of the country. But he always took care to capture for this purpose only children from distant or hostile tribes." On one occasion Sutter discussed a shipment of kidnapped Indians that he had provided Antonio Sunol, a ranchero in the San Francisco Bay area: "Today I send 30 Indians. These are gentiles and have never worked with mission Indians. Therefore, keep them as long as you want, but provide a shirt for each of them and deduct its value from their wages." Sutter did not address the Indian slave trade in his later reminiscences other than to declare that "it was common in those days to seize Indian women and children and sell them. This the Californians [Mexicans] did as well as Indians."

Whatever the frequency of such activities, Governor Alvarado eventually exposed Sutter's illicit business. "The public can see how inhuman were the operations of Sutter who had no scruples about depriving Indian mothers of their children. Sutter has sent these little Indian children as gifts to people who live far from the place of their birth, without demanding of them any promises that in their homes the In-

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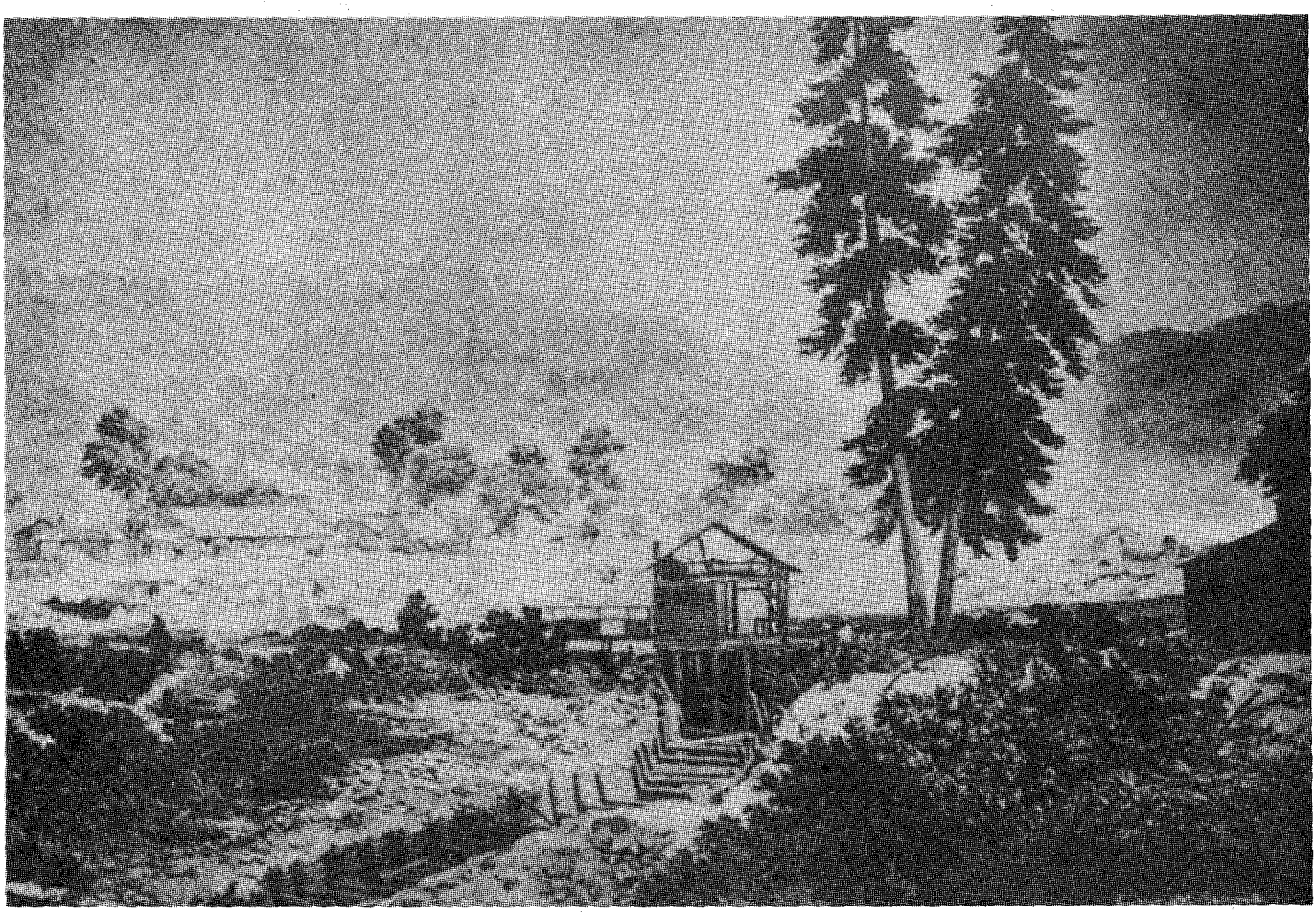
"I could not reconcile my feelings to see these fellows being driven, as it were, around some narrow troughs of hollow tree trunks, out of which, crouched on their haunches, they fed more like beasts than human beings, using their hands in hurried manner to convey to their mouths the thin porage which was served to them."

dians should be treated with kindness. Sutter's conduct was so despicable that if I had not succeeded in persuading Sutter to stop the kidnapping operations it is probable that there would have been a general uprising of Indians within the Northern district under Sutter's jurisdiction as a Mexican official."

Although he continued to oversee Indian affairs in the Sacramento Valley as a sub-agent for several years after the American conquest of California, by 1849 Sutter's wealth and power in the region faced serious challenges. Gold lured Anglo-American prospectors who had no respect for Sutter's property and saw Indians as targets for extermination rather than labor exploitation. Sutter's workmen deserted him and squatters took over and despoiled his properties. Litigation over land titles led to Sutter's bankruptcy by 1852. Although the California state legislature granted him a monthly pension of $250 from 1862 to 1878, he never recouped his losses. In 1880 he died impoverished in a Washington, D.C., hotel far from the source of his earlier good fortune.

If, as historian James Rawls argues, it was Indians who actually discovered the gold in the tailrace of Sutter's sawmill (not James Marshall as is popularly accepted), perhaps they were then able to exact a measure of retribution for Sutter's labor policy. Nonetheless, they became victims of the thousands of outsiders whose diseases, homicide, and disruption of food supplies substantially diminished the Indian population by 1869.

By the 1850s, it was too late to reverse the storm sweeping over once pastoral California as the gold rush spent its force and fury. The self-styled visionary who liked to imagine himself as "Captain Sutter of the Royal Swiss Guard of France" had become, like the Indians whose labor he had exploited, a tragic victim of the *new* California. Yet, despite the obvious problems for both Sutter and the Indians with the Americanization of the region, it is difficult to agree with historian Richard Dillon's assessment that "in comparison with most Americans and Mexican-Californians, [Sutter] was pro-Indian, in a decidedly paternalistic way." Rather, it would appear that the popular image of his Christian charity needs revision in light of his Indian policy, especially given his official responsibility for managing Indian relations in the Sacramento Valley.



California Department of Parks and Recreation

Charles Nahl's painting of Sutter's Miller, about 1881.

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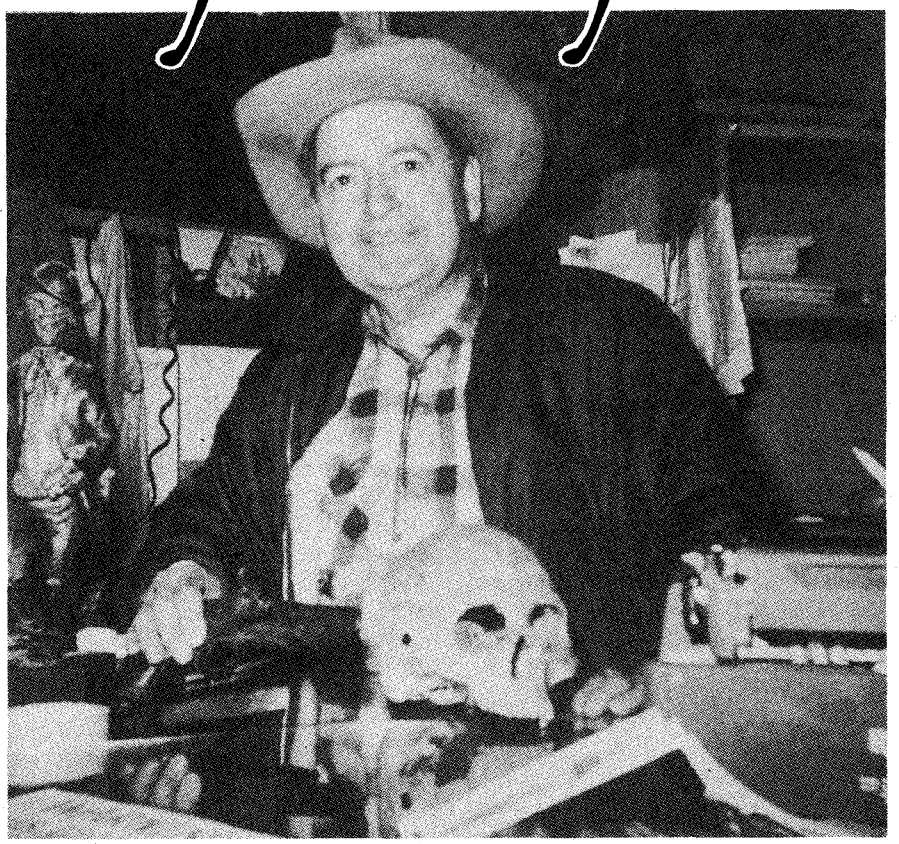
The Mystery of Frank Fish

By BEN T. TRAYWICK

I visited Frank Fish at his Amador City museum in late October 1962. I took one look at his face, and I thought, "He found it!"



Author's Photo

Frank Fish displays a skull and pistol that he found while treasure hunting.

Death came to one of the most famous and successful of the treasure hunters, Frank Fish, in April 1963. By all accounts from legal sources and the news media, he died by his own hand. But did he?

Frank was my close and personal friend; my family and I spent many hours in his Gold Rush Museum, listening to his tales of lost and buried treasures. My children and I were fascinated by the oddities he had found, such as a rattlesnake with four small, lizard-like legs.

He loved his museum and its thousands of relics and was very proud of them. In addition, at the time of his death he appeared to be on the verge of locating a large treasure for which he had searched many years.

Like most successful treasure hunters, Frank was extremely reluctant to reveal locations or other information. Several years before he had found a Wells Fargo treasure box containing thousands of dollars in gold. Jubilant over his find, he made it public. As a result the U.S. government got their fingers into his find. Frank quickly learned never to get the government involved in anything he wanted kept simple.

As a close friend, however, he did tell me some of his activities and even took me on a few treasure hunts. One such trip was near Mokelumne Hill on Jesus Maria Road. His story on this treasure was:

"During the 1850s it was common custom for the miners of the Mother Lode country to allow the local merchant to keep and ship all their raw gold. In this case the merchant was an old Chinese called Wah Cheng. Cheng had a strong iron box in which he kept the miner's gold until it could be shipped. On this particular occasion the old Chinaman had $75,000 in raw gold securely locked in his sturdy iron box.

"One night a Mexican sneaked into the store to rob old Cheng. Though the thief's wicked knife jabbed and slashed bloody gashes in his skinny body, Cheng steadfastly refused to tell where he had hidden the box of gold.

"At length the Mexican, impatient and frightened at all the commotion raised during the torture of Wah Cheng, slit the old man's throat from ear to ear. Miners, alerted by all the noise, descended upon the store. They arrived just in time to apprehend the killer as he bolted from the building. They found the battered and slashed body of old Wah Cheng. Infuriated at the sight of Cheng, the blood splattered walls, and the ransacked store, they swiftly and efficiently dispensed mining camp justice by hanging the Mexican from the limb of the big tree in front of the store.

"The miners searched the store and the general area thoroughly, but none of them were ever able to find the iron box holding their gold. Evidently, the $75,000 still remains where old Wah Cheng hid it."

Frank and I found the old Chinese store and combed the ruins and surrounding area with a metal detector. We found numerous relics, but no treasure.

Later, on a ridge near the old Chinese store, in a rock fence built by Chinese miners, Frank found a small bean pot

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filled with jewelry and gold coins valued at $1,700. Frank was kind enough to give me the three-legged, iron bean pot. I still have it.

A ledger from an old Chinese grocery store always lay on Frank's counter. It was filled with Chinese characters which none of us could read. One morning, a Chinese man from San Francisco came through Frank's museum. He stopped at the counter, looked at the ledger, then asked Frank if he knew what that page said. When Frank admitted he didn't, the man read it to him. The Chinese grocery man had made note in his ledger that he had buried a glass bottle of gold nuggets beneath the back steps of his store.

As soon as the museum visitors cleared out, Frank locked his doors, got into his truck, and headed for Coulterville. He knew the exact location of the Chinese grocery store where he had found the ledger. The back steps had long ago rotted away, but Frank dug where they had been. And there—just where the Chinese grocery man had buried it over 100 years before—lay a glass bottle of small gold nuggets weighing approximately two pounds.

SHORTLY before his untimely demise, Frank revealed to me that he had found positive evidence of a large treasure hidden near Columbia, California.

Money in use in the Mother Lode in 1850 was Spanish, English, French, Mexican, or whatever minted coin was available. The American government wished to place more of their legally minted money into circulation. To do so, they agreed to cast raw gold into $20 gold pieces for the miners. They would use a portable mint at Columbia. The service was performed free of charge, so practically all the miners took advantage of it.

The miners sent their raw gold to Columbia and a cast totalling $600,000 was made. Four well-armed men and a team of six mules left Columbia to distribute that huge load of gold pieces among the miners. The men, wagon, and gold were seen by several riders a short distance out of Columbia. That was the last anyone ever saw of them: they vanished from the earth.

According to letters and papers of that period which Frank possessed, the popular belief was that the men had succumbed to the lure of all that gold and had stolen it. But those gold coins were like no others, and none of them had ever turned up anywhere . . . until Frank Fish came onto the scene.

Though he did not indicate why, Frank firmly believed the men had been ambushed by parties unknown; the wagon, mules, and gold coins stolen; and the bodies so well hidden that no trace of them was ever found.

To allay my skepticism, Frank laid three twenty-dollar gold pieces on the table before me and said, "I traced the route taken by the men with the load of gold, and where I believed to be good locations for an ambush, I searched very carefully with my detector. At one of those spots I found these!" With a smile he indicated the gold pieces. Under my persistent questioning he finally admitted that there were several more spots in the same area that he wished to search with great care.

I visited Frank Fish at his Amador City museum in late October 1962. I took one look at his face, and I thought, "He found it!" Frank took me aside from his other visitors and began to relate his latest quest for the Columbia treasure. He had not located that particular treasure, but he *had* found something. In his slow, drawling speech, he said, "Ben, you remember I told you I was searching all the likely ambush spots? Well, I was doing that when I spotted some unusual rocks several yards away in the brush. Upon investigation I found them to be the remains of an old cabin. I went over the entire area very carefully. About twenty yards from the old chimney I came to a shal-

Author's Photo

Chinese Buddha in Fish museum, 1962.

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Author's Photo

Items in Frank Fish's museum, 1962. The black pot in the lower left corner is the one Fish found in a rock fence. It was filled with gold coins and jewelry.

I heard no more of Frank Fish until I learned of his death in April 1963. In disbelief, I read that he had taken his own life. Frank Fish, the treasure hunter I knew, a suicide! Impossible! It was utterly ridiculous to believe that he would do such a thing. Some of the facts just didn't fit.

low gulley. On an impulse I went down it with the detector. There was a very strong indication of metal. My first excited thought was of $600,000 in gold! Frantically, I began to dig, casting nervous glances over my shoulder to assure myself that no one was watching. You know that it is not at all unusual for me to be followed.

"I FIRST unearthed a Spanish sword, then a knife, and quite unexpectedly, the remains of a skeleton. The skull was well preserved and had a bullet hole in the back. Further digging revealed an old pistol.

"Still deeper I uncovered an earthen jar, called an olla by the Mexicans. It was heavy beyond imagination. Clearing the neck of it I poured part of the contents into my hand. A stream of small gold nuggets ran out.

"Still there appeared to be metal in that unusual gulley! I continued to dig and discovered a small metal pot which was every bit as heavy as the olla had been! My trembling hands poured out its contents and my happy ears heard the musical clink of coins. This pot was filled to the brim with dirty, blackened silver dollars!"

As he told me the story of each item that he had found, Frank laid every one before me: the gun, the rusty metal objects, the olla and gold, the pot of silver coins, and the grisly skull which did, indeed, have a hole through the back. A bone specialist later examined the skull and informed Frank that the hole was, in fact, a bullet hole and had been made by an approximately .70 caliber slug.

I agreed with Frank that he had found a nice bit of loot, but what was the connection to the $600,000? Grinning to show that he was still ahead of me, Frank laid two more of those unusual twenty-dollar gold pieces, dated 1850, on the counter. "I found these in the ruins of the cabin," he said. "It is my theory that the hold-up artists were there after they stole the gold wagon. Probably they lived there before the hold-up and likely for a short time afterwards in order not to arouse suspicion. I can see no connection between the gold wagon and the skeleton and the loot buried in the wash. It is most certain that someone else killed the man and buried him in the gulley years before; the gully probably held its grisly secret even while the outlaws lived at the cabin. I am more than ever convinced that the $600,000 is buried somewhere nearby."

I AM SURE that Frank Fish would not have made that last statement without ample evidence, but no amount of persuasion could pry any more information from him. Only a sly grin answered my many questions.

In January 1963, my company transferred me to Winnipeg, Canada, to build a missle plant. Just before my departure I again visited Frank in Amador City. At that time he seemed in good health, high spirits, and full of enthusiasm over another impending trip to Columbia. He was planning a three-day search in February, using, for the first time, his new, specially built, air-conditioned desert buggy. That was the last time that I saw him.

I heard no more of Frank Fish until I learned of his death in April 1963. In disbelief, I read that he had taken his own life. Frank Fish, the treasure hunter I knew, a suicide! Impossible! It was utterly ridiculous to believe that he would do such a thing. Some of the facts just didn't fit. Apparently, he made no provision for his burial as he was interred in the Jackson City Cemetery and his plot marked only with the undertaker's tab. I heard Frank say many times that he hated Jackson and am sure that he would not have wanted to be buried there in what appeared to be potter's field.

Further, he made no arrangements for the disposal of the 7,000 priceless items in his museum, items that he had spent

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his life collecting. He had often discussed leaving them to the California Historical Society.

Also, during his extensive search for the yellow riches at Columbia, Frank said that he had uncovered absolute evidence of an English settlement not previously known to historians. English items that he found dated the settlement at about 1600. The discovery could reveal a whole chapter of our country's history heretofore completely unknown. Frank faithfully promised me copies of his notes, map, and photos of the site. However, it appears that all this knowledge died with Frank.

JUST A SHORT time before his death Frank purchased a new, four-wheel-drive, air-conditioned vehicle with sleeping accommodations to aid him on his treasure hunts. Such a vehicle was very unusual at the time, and it had to be specially ordered—not a usual act for anyone contemplating suicide.

Frank would not have overlooked any of those items, had he been thinking of killing himself. Though he had solved the mysterious riddles of lost and buried treasures in life, Frank Fish left behind many curious and unanswered questions.

Did that $600,000 in gold lie buried somewhere near Columbia as Fish believed?

Does it lie there yet?

Did Frank find the $600,000 in gold coins?

Did the treasure cause his death?

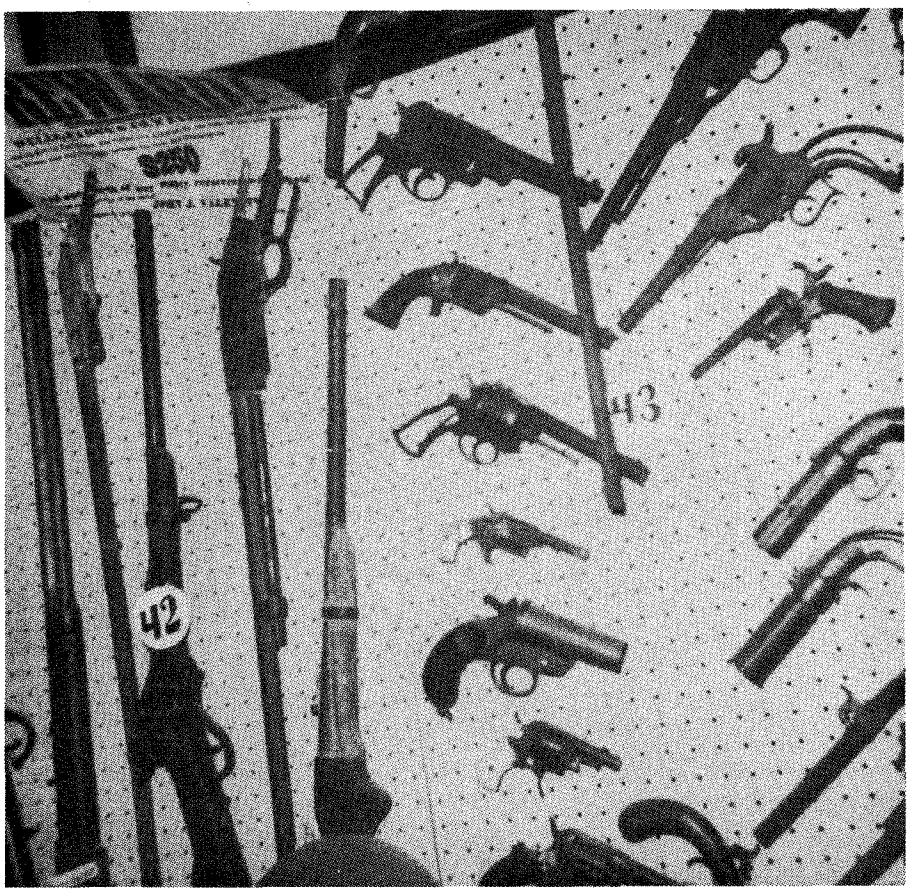
Most suicides prepare for death—why didn't Frank?

And last and most important of all—why was everyone so anxious to have Frank Fish dead, buried, and forgotten?

Frank was found dead on April 7, 1963, and was buried on April 9, 1963. His death certificate states that *no* autopsy was performed.

When I returned to California in the spring of 1964, several elderly people asked me to obtain more information on the demise of Frank Fish. I attempted to do so, but was met by very unfriendly local authorities. I was insistent and was finally told that the case was closed; it would be best if I went home and forgot about it. Local inhabitants threw up a wall of silence.

The Amador *Dispatch* of Thursday, April 11, 1963, reported that a neighbor said Fish had expressed despondency because he was tired of living alone. Just weeks before, my wife had questioned Frank about his not having a wife and family. He had laughed and replied that a wife and family were responsibilities and encumbrances that he did not need. They would only interfere with the things that he wanted to do, and he liked to be able to come and go as he pleased.



Author's Photo

Old guns at Frank Fish's Gold Rush Museum in Amador City, California, 1961.

In 1988, twenty-five years after Frank's death, a friend of mine was going to be driving up the Mother Lode highway. I asked him to stop at the Jackson cemetery and get me a photo of Frank's grave. When he inquired locally about the graveyard and the grave, two men followed him to the cemetery and watched him the entire time he was there. Coincidence?

He stopped to see a friend in the area and, still curious, he asked this local person about Frank Fish. He was told, "We don't discuss that here. I don't want to hear any more about it."

In late 1988, a writer friend visited me, read my file on Frank Fish, and looked at my photos. Curious, he stopped at Jackson and inquired about the record of Frank's death. He was told that apparently Frank did not die in that county, as there was no record. My friend, fortunately, had a copy of the "Permit for Disposition of Human Remains" pertaining to Frank Fish. The record of his death was "found" shortly after.

Early in 1989, I was having dinner at the Wagon Wheel restaurant in Tombstone with some treasure hunting friends from Denver. I was telling them about Frank Fish, when a man sitting at the next table said, "I knew Frank Fish." That gentleman had lived in Jackson at the time but has since moved away. However, he essentially agreed that there were a lot of unanswered questions concerning Frank Fish. He did not believe the suicide story either. He also told me that another of those unusual twenty-dollar gold pieces had surfaced in the Pioneer, California, area.

I PROBABLY knew as much about Frank Fish and his treasure hunting activities as anyone. Yet, I don't know the answers to this mystery. I only know that I find it extremely difficult to believe that the Frank Fish I knew would take his own life, intentionally and in such a manner.

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Author's Photo

One From the Old School

By WILLARD H. PORTER

John "Tackhead" Bowman in the early 1950s. The fifty-three-year-old cowhand was still competing as a steer roper.

As a rodeo historian, I am often amazed at the ruggedness of the old contestants. Not that the contemporary crop are sissies—far from it. But the older guys were the ones who *made* rodeo, who harnessed the sport. They stayed with it, even while enduring early-day hardships.

One of the "toughs" who toughed it out was John Bowman. Why else would they call him "Tackhead"? Certainly not because he was a carpenter. No, he was a cowboy, a roper, and bulldogger. And he was called Tackhead because he was able to take the bumps, the jolts, the hammerings of pioneer rodeo cowboy life.

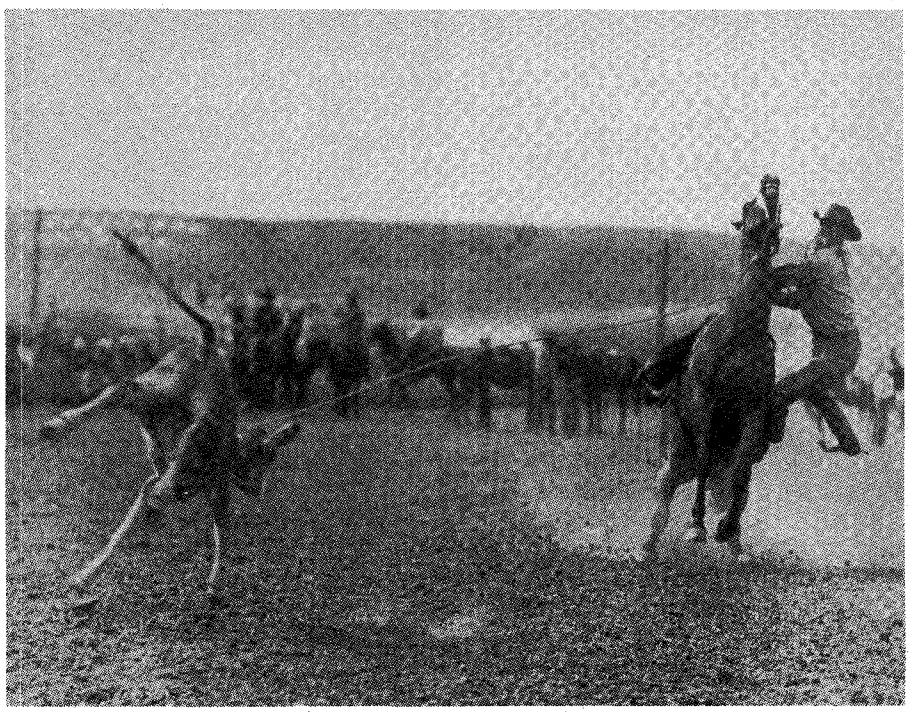
John Bowman played the game and looked the part of the rodeo cowboy, even though I once saw him bellied-up to a Wyoming bar dressed in a dark blue suit, a white shirt, and a tie. He was vigorously handsome, not unlike the Marlboro cigarette men. He brooked no nonsense from hangers-on, would-be rodeoers, or hero worshipers. Years ago at Tucson, Arizona, one of the lesser lights greeted him in the arena. "Hello, Tackhead," the fellow said, grinning from ear to ear, obviously wanting to make an impression. If looks could kill that fellow would have dropped dead in his saddle.

Bowman enjoyed being called Tackhead by the top hands, most of whom respected his ability. Yet he must have found it less than complimentary when addressed in that fashion by an inferior athlete. To be on the safe side, I called him Mr. Bowman during our first interview in 1953 at Laramie, Wyoming, where, at fifty-three years old, he was entered in the annual steer roping event.

"Mr. Bowman," I told him then, "I want to do a story on your activities here. Do you mind?"

"Hell, no," he said, eyeballing me with no little suspicion. "Just don't get in my way."

So as John "Tackhead" Bowman



Author's Collection

John ropes a calf at an unidentified rodeo, and R.R. Doubleday, the first celebrated rodeo photographer, catches the action.

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went to work with his ropes, I went to work with pencil and notebook. Here's what I learned about him. His father, George, was a rancher in the Osage country of Oklahoma. John, however, was born in Rogers, Arkansas, July 31, 1899, while his mother was visiting kinfolks. The mother and infant returned to Beggs, Indian Territory, where the youngster was reared.

Following an apprenticeship with ropes, cattle, and horses, he left home when he was fourteen and joined Booger Red's Texas Wild West Show. Later he worked for the 101 Ranch Show out of Ponca City. During that period he rode broncs, a chore he would abandon when he became proficient in the timed events. Other Wildy-West groups he rode for included the Hoyt Campbell, Doc Moss, and Texas Bud shows. His first competitive rodeo was at Beggs, in 1915, where he won both the bronc riding and the calf roping.

In those days, rodeo was not a full-time business for anybody. It was usually part-time Wild-West, part-time contest rodeo, and part-time jobs. He worked for the famous XIT Ranch, out of Dalhart, Texas, and for the Diamond A's in New Mexico, where he met up with another first-class cowboy, Jim Brister of Lordsburg. Whenever possible, those two would take off, leading their rodeo rope horses and riding ranch horses. In that way they used to make every rodeo in New Mexico and Arizona, from Nogales to Las Cruces.

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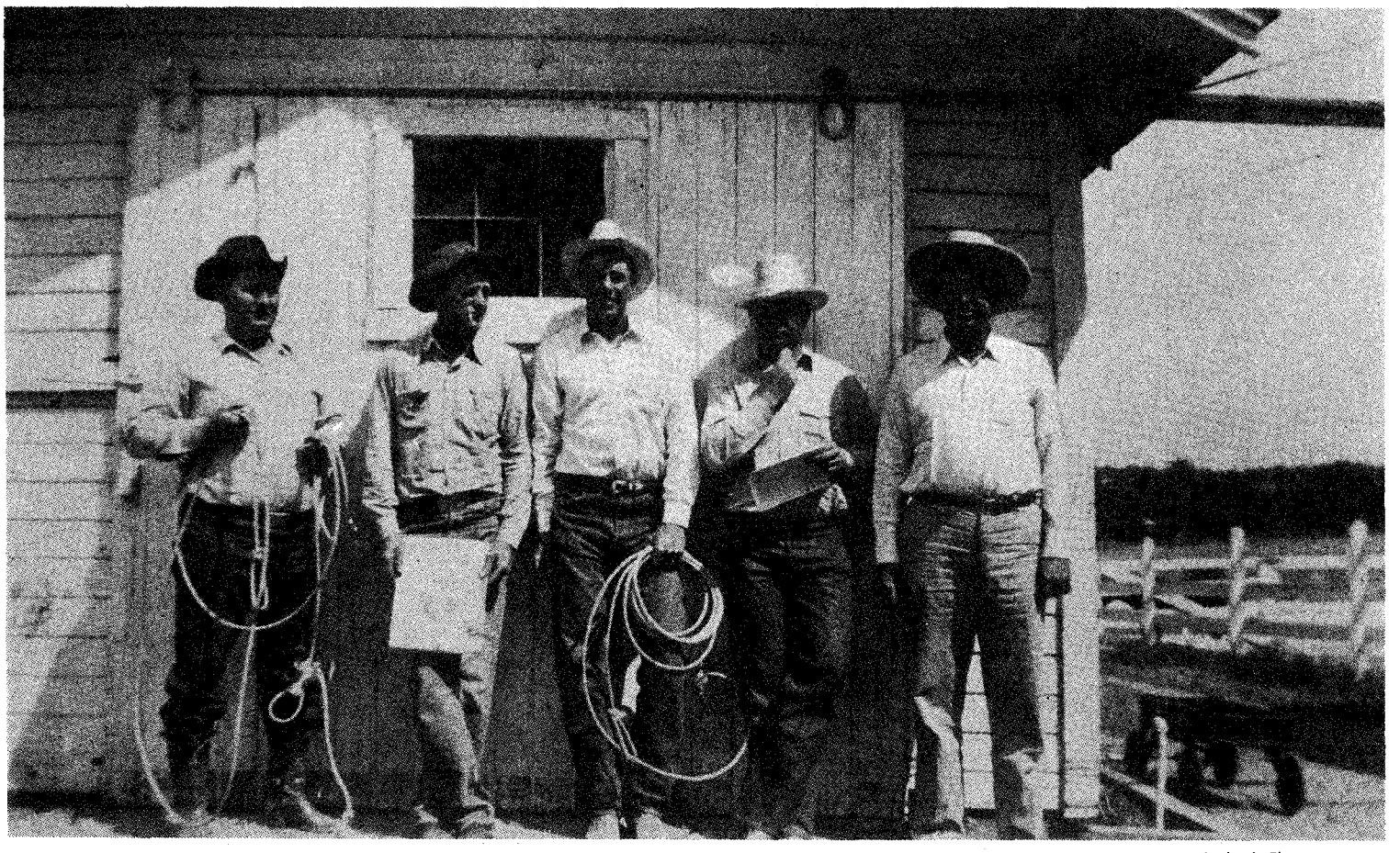
Another famous rodeo personality that John worked with was the black man, Bill Pickett, dubbed "The Dusky Demon" by the 101 Ranch, for whom he bulldogged steers "bite-'em-down" style. Bowman and Pickett both jumped from the left or near side of the horse, whereas most steer wrestlers have always jumped from the right, or off, side.

Another event that John often entered was wild cow milking. The event helped him become World Champion All-Around Cowboy in 1936. That year he also took the world title in his other event, single steer roping, which he had previously held in 1933. He and Vic Castro of Richmond, California, won the wild cow milking at Livermore in 1950. By that time, John had moved to Oakdale, where he took advantage of the abundance of team ropings in California.

With a seasoned bunch of hands, John went to London, England, to participate in Tex Austin's International Rodeo in 1934. Anybody who can win the calf roping at Cheyenne is assured of lasting rodeo fame. John did it in 1935, averaging 19.1 on three head. He executed an even more astonishing feat at Pendleton



Author's Photo

A salty group of rodeoers if there ever was one: left to right, Dick Truitt, John Bowman, Toots Mansfield, Everett Shaw, and Juan Salinas.

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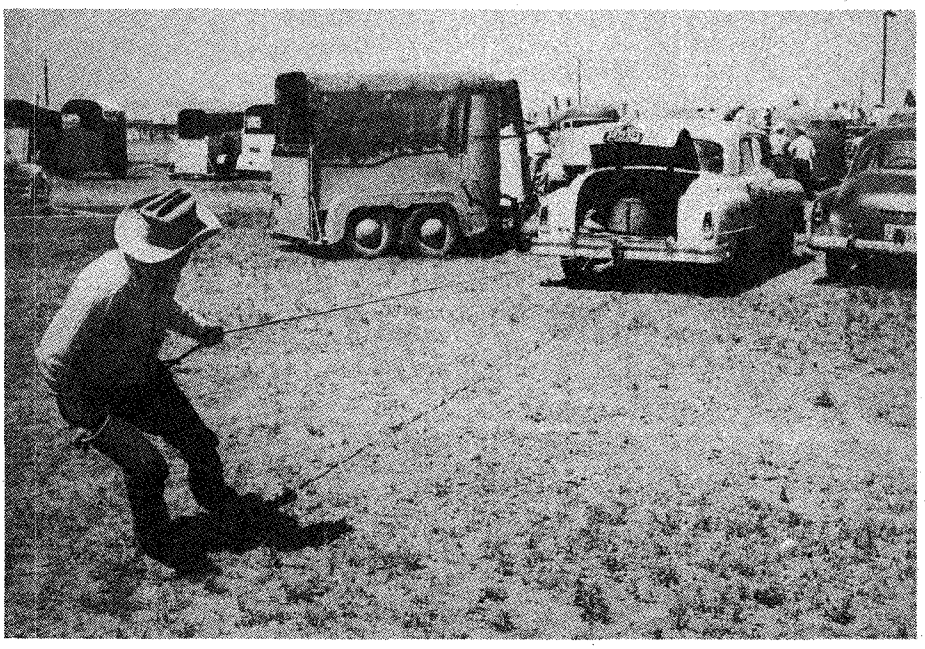
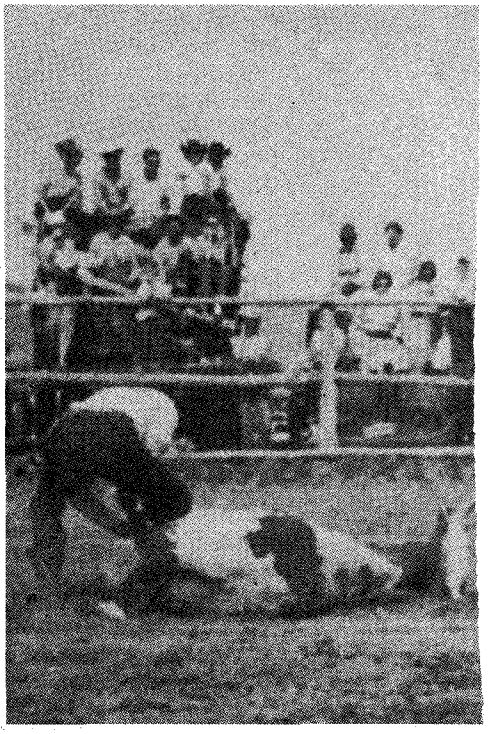




in 1945, when he triumphed in both the calf roping and steer roping. Of course, he won the coveted all-around title. The following year he repeated as champion in steer roping at Pendleton.

He was one of the original signers of the "Boston Petition," a document that created the Cowboys Turtle Association in 1936. His signature appears on reproductions of the original between the names of Rusty McGinty, the first Turtle president, and Herb Meyers, a roping friend from Okmulgee, Oklahoma.

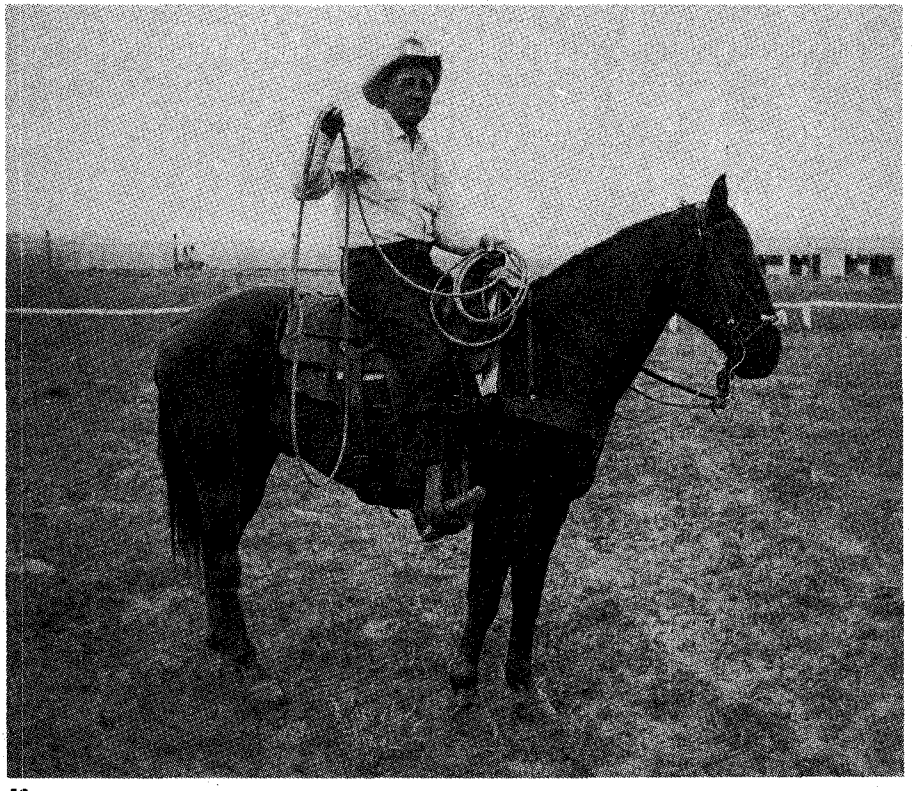
Since Bowman was close to forty years old when the Turtles were founded, his main events then were steer roping and team roping. A member in good standing, he competed with CTA Number 10. He was never much interested in administering rodeo, but remained a contestant all his life.

Like all ropers, he was hard-pressed to turn down a matched contest. One of the more celebrated of those matches was in August of 1942, when he and Vic Castro paired to defeat Shorty Williamson and Ki Silacci, two well-known Salinas ranchers, on ten head. John was on one of his steady rope horses, Pickpocket; Castro rode the bay, Baldy.

The best cowboys in those days had a lot of horses. They had time to train them and they enjoyed trading top horseflesh. The last time I saw Bowman, for instance, he was taking a horse he'd bought in Oklahoma back to California. I happened to be playing poker that night at Rodeo Ranch, owned by Liz Herron of Benson, Arizona. Her sons Lex and Will Connelly were active contestants in those days. It was just before La Fiesta de los Vaqueros, Tucson's mid-winter rodeo, when the ranch was open to many friends. Playing poker that night were Liz, Lex and Will, Tater and Jo Decker, and, if memory serves me, Barney Willis.

About 11:00 p.m., John Bowman and Bub Gatzman pulled in on their way to the West Coast. Sure, they could spend the night! Of course, there were beds for them! The game suddenly broke up as

Author's Photo



Left: John Bowman on the steer horse, Powder Horn. Opposite: Three great steer ropers in the early 1950s, (left to right) John Bowman, Everett Shaw, and Carl Arnold.

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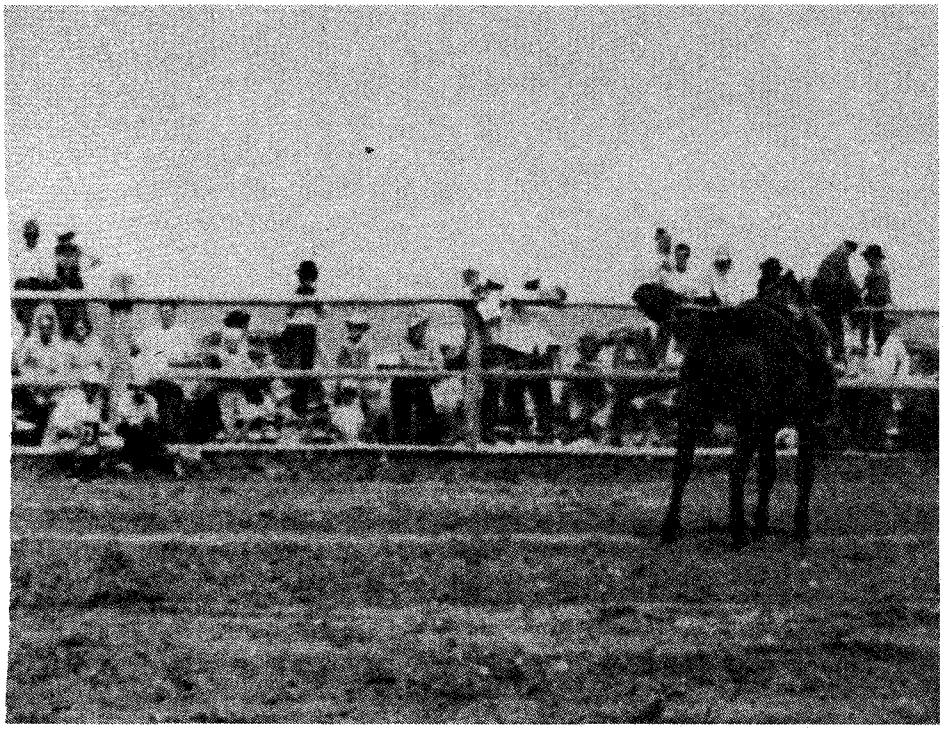


John gets his catch rope in shape (far left) before roping a steer at a Laramie, Wyoming, contest in the early 1950s. At the same contest (right), John puts the tie on a big steer.

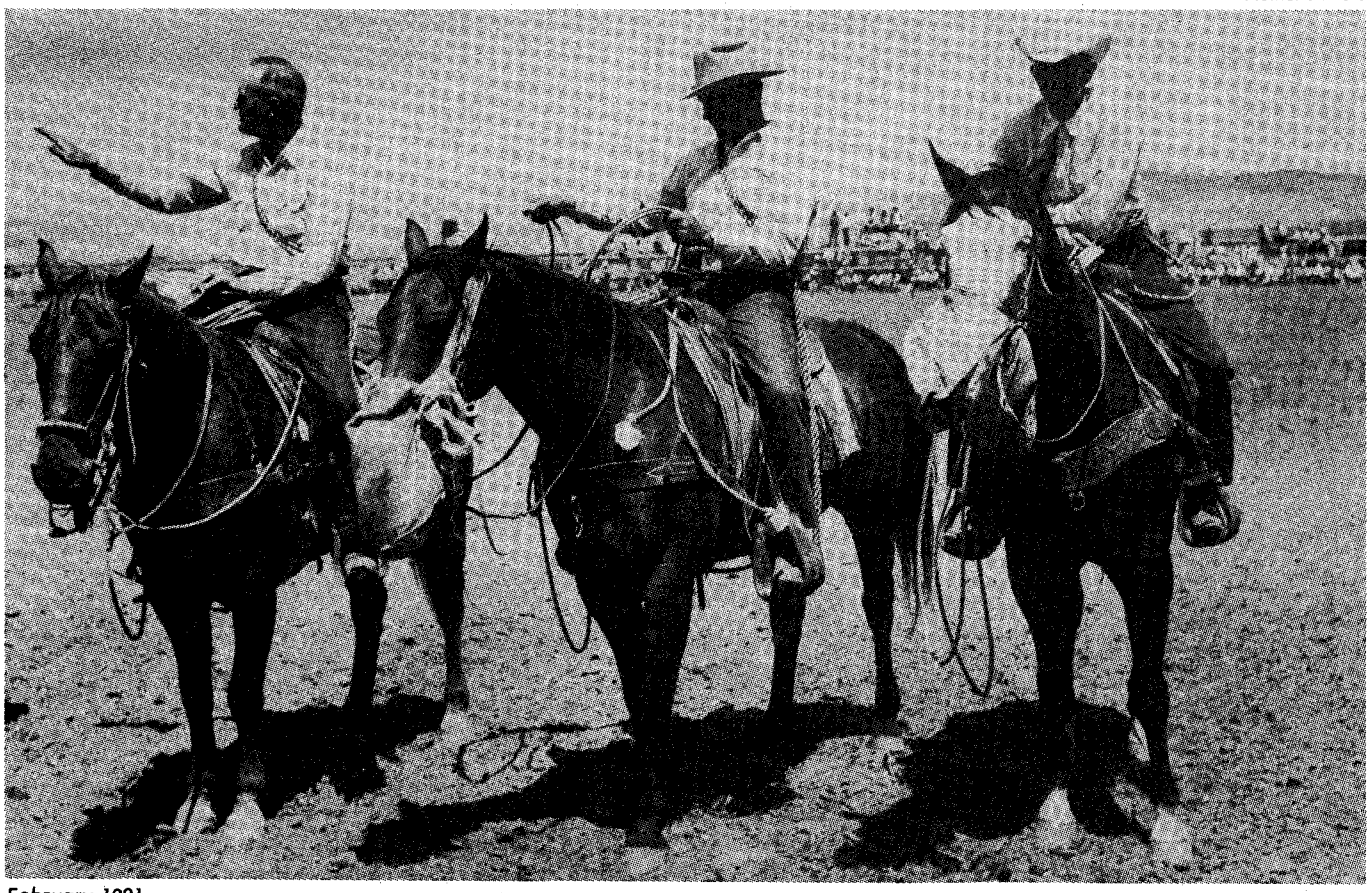
all hands scooted outside to take the horse out of the trailer and bed him down for the night. When I went to bed, around midnight, western stories were still circulating. And when I got up, at the crack of dawn, Bowman and Gatzman were already up and gone, cruising on down the road.

Bowman loved a good rodeo horse as much as anyone ever has. And he loved to talk about them. In his long career riding good horses, he won about fifteen saddles, plus trophy buckles, gold watches, and other prizes.

Some of the wonderful dogging horses he owned or used were Chico, a black horse that he purchased from Gene Ross; Mike Hastings' horses Sport and Stranger, both top individuals; Paddy, owned by the super hand, Dick Shelton; Silver, a Harry Williams horse; Set 'Em Up, also called Jay, a Clay Carr horse; Colonel Clyde, and a son called Decoration, good rope horses; Coon Dog and Hard Tack, fine dogging horses; and Dan and Blue, rope horses that Bowman used in his later years.

John always said that he expected to be killed in an auto or truck accident because he was on the road so much. But in July 1959, he had surgery for intestinal cancer at San Francisco's Stanford Lane Hospital. His recovery was encouraging, but on August 11 he was rushed back to the hospital with a severe headache. He lapsed into a coma and died of brain cancer on August 13. During those two days, his wife, Lucille, and daughter, Bettilou, were constantly at his side.

Author's Photo



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Violent Lives

GOLD CAMP DESPERADOES, A STUDY OF VIOLENCE, CRIME, AND PUNISHMENT ON THE MINING FRONTIER. *By R.E. Mather and F.E. Boswell. History West Publishing Company, P.O. Box 612066, San Jose, California 95161. $23.95, cloth bound.*

As the twenty-first century approaches, scholars of western outlaws and peace officers increasingly have concentrated on the waning years of the last frontier. They have done studies of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, of Harry Tracy and the Arizona Rangers, and Bill Tilghman. But western historians should never lose touch with earlier men and events, and the recent emphasis on turn-of-the-century figures was interrupted by, among other books, a 1987 biography of Henry Plummer by R.E. Mather and F.E. Boswell.

Now Mather and Boswell have cooperated to present another study of violence in the early West, this time by exploring the lives of a number of young men who became gold camp desperadoes. The raw mining camps of the 1850s and 1860s were hotbeds of gambling, drinking, prostitution, thievery, and spontaneous violence. Most of the biographies in this book are of youths from solid family backgrounds who succumbed to the vices and temptations of the wolf-howl towns on the mining frontier. Over and over we read of adolescents who, despite education and good moral upbringing, slipped into sordid habits, associated with dangerous men, and engaged in shootings, knifings, or robberies. Often these young men became hardened criminals and their families were disgraced.

The authors' research is exhaustive and includes impressive genealogical work which places the individual desperadoes within a personal, familial context, thereby rendering the depressing ends of their lives all the more tragic. The book is sprinkled with fascinating details of prison existence and life in the early West. The book is most rewarding in its introduction to a new cast of tough young gunmen who resorted to violence just as readily as Billy the Kid or Wild Bill Hickok. *Gold Camp Desperadoes* is a must for every western history buff.—*Bill O'Neal, Carthage, Texas.*

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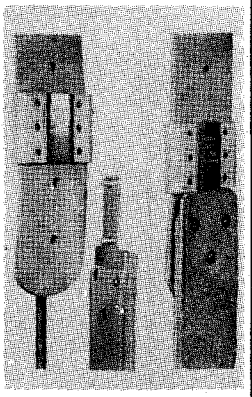

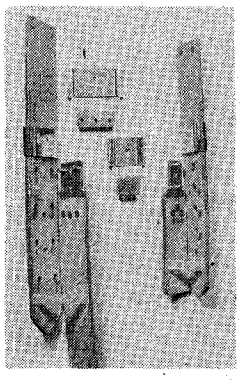

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Indian Reference

WHO WAS WHO IN NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY. *By Carl Waldman. Facts on File, 460 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. $45, cloth bound.*

Here is a much-needed reference tool, a concise biographical dictionary of American Indians. The author is also the compiler of the *Atlas of the North American Indian* and the *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes.* Waldman's newest effort is limited in scope to Indians in North America, including Canada, only through the nineteenth century.

Some readers may criticize the compiler for leaving out "lesser" Native Americans while including non-Indians who interacted with the various tribes—explorers, soldiers, scientists, and artists—during the long and sad conflict of cultures. But in this reviewer's opinion, the trade-off was a good one which virtually doubled the usefulness of the volume. There is still plenty of room not only for famous chiefs like Tecumseh and Quanah Parker, and warriors like Crazy Horse, but also for medicine men and others whose names will be little-known.

The same thing goes for the whites. You will find not just the usual Carson, Crockett, and Custer, but Carr, Harney, and Sumner as well. The same space limitations which made Indian selection arbitrary excludes many of their worthy opponents, like Earl Van Dorn. There is not much room for pictures, but the illustrations are well chosen, and captions identify the sources, sometimes even with negative numbers should a reader want to secure a print. Waldman could not include bibliographical information, but his work appears to be accurate.

There are some flaws, like using "Vincente" for the Spanish "Vicente," and the feminized "Barboncita" for "Barboncito." The book should also be used with care because of large holes in American ethnology and Indian history.

Still, this is a first-rate reference source. As a bonus, it is a folio-sized book with large type, unlike too many "who's who" volumes, and printed on good, heavy stock which should withstand much wear and tear.—*Richard H. Dillon, Mill Valley, California.*

Accounts of the Gold Rush

THE GOLD DISCOVERY JOURNAL OF AZARIAH SMITH. *Edited by David Bigler. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, Utah 84112. $17.50, cloth bound.*

This beautifully edited and documented journal is issued in the University of Utah Press's Mormon Studies series, but is of much broader interest—it is a valuable historical document of the Southwest and Far West.

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Bigler's account of the Californina gold discovery has been an essential historical source. Only now do we have in print the only other comparable journal.

Azariah Smith, after soldiering with the Mormon Battalion during the Mexican War, worked for Capt. John Sutter and Jim Marshall and was one of the first to discover gold at Coloma. In this journal, he recounts the long march from Fort Leavenworth to Santa Fe over the Cimarron Cutoff, then Lt. Col. Philip St. George Cooke's efforts to widen the old trappers' Gila Trail into a wagon road to California, a task too difficult for Gen. Stephen Watts Kearny and his regular army dragoons. Too late for any combat (except one Indian skirmish), the battalion pulled garrison duty in San Diego and at Mission San Luis Rey before mustering out.

Smith's narrative contains interesting incidents and individuals. The three scouts for the battalion, for example, all drunks and worthless, according to Col. Cooke, were major mountain men and plainsmen—Paulino Weaver, Antoine Leroux, and Baptiste Charbonneau. The latter was Sacajawea's son. Surprisingly, good-guy and Mormon scout Howard Egan was accused by bad-guy "Mountain Meadows" John D. Lee of stealing gold watches while both were prying payroll funds from the soldier-Saints.

After the gold discovery, Smith headed home to Salt Lake and helped blaze a new Sierra Nevada trail through Carson Pass. Indians massacred part of his unit at Tragedy Springs. He and his comrades then met some of the major California-bound emigrant companies, such as those of James Clyman, Peter Lassen, and Joseph Chiles.

This book is a model of scholarship—well-documented, textually compact, readable, even inexpensive. The editor is no professor, but a gentleman from the much-lambasted "private sector," far from any public trough. Bigler, a distant relative of both Smith and Henry Bigler, is director of public affairs for U.S. Steel in Pittsburgh. If this is the work of what the academics like to call a layman, then send us more such "amateurs!"—*Richard H. Dillon, Mill Valley, California.*

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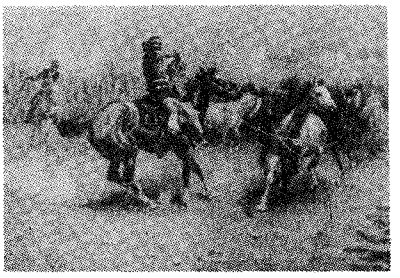

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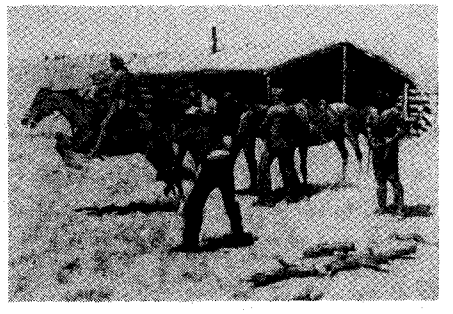

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John and Jim Younger v
—March 16, 1874; Monegaw Spri

By BILL O'NEAL

John and Jim Younger were among fourteen children born to a Missouri landholder and politician. The boys helped their father work on the family farm near Lee's Summit, but when Kansas Jayhawkers killed the senior Younger, John became increasingly bitter and moody. Born in 1851, John was fifteen when he gunned down a man named Gillcreas for slapping him with a dead fish. John was exonerated on the grounds of self-defense, but two years later he was alternately hanged and beaten in his own barn by a posse attempting to learn the whereabouts of Cole and Jim Younger.

Jim was born on January 15, 1848, four years to the day after Cole, and he followed Cole into the ranks of William C. Quantrill's Civil War guerrillas in hopes of avenging his father's murder. Jim stayed with Quantrill throughout the war, raiding and looting and taking on the attitude of an outlaw. He spent time in the military prison in Alton, Illinois, and was released late in 1865. Jim returned to the family farm, but soon he joined Cole and the James brothers robbing banks.

When their mother died in 1870, John grew even more temperamental and surly. He joined Cole, Jim, and a sister in Texas, and for a while clerked at a store in Dallas. He soon got into trouble, then engaged in a bloody shootout with lawmen. In January 1871, Dallas County Sheriff C.W. Nichols and Deputy John McMahan tried to arrest John for a shooting scrape involving a man named Russell. When gunfire erupted, a brother of Russell's ran up with a shotgun and shot John in the arm. John's companion, Thompson McDaniels, wounded Sheriff Nichols, and Younger killed the other lawman. McDaniels and Younger then mounted and rode to the home of a friend, where John had his wound treated. The two men then fled to Missouri, finding refuge there in the home of a mutual friend near tiny Chalk Level.

After his wound healed, John went to California but soon headed back toward Missouri. While aboard a train in Colorado he contentiously engaged in another gunfight. He jumped off the train, made his way to Denver, then joined an east-bound wagon train. Suspected of participation in a train robbery at Gads Hill, Missouri, John and

After his fatal encounter with Pinkerton detectives, John Younger's body was taken to the McFerrin cabin near Monegaw Springs.

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;. Pinkertons
gs, Missouri—

Jim took refuge at the home of a friend, Theodorick Snuffer, at Monegaw Springs, Missouri.

Pinkerton detectives discovered their whereabouts and determined to arrest them. Accompanied by Deputy Sheriff Ed Daniels, Pinkerton agents Louis J. Lull and John Boyle spent Monday, March 16, 1874, posing as cattle buyers in the Monegaw Springs neighborhood. When they stopped at the Snuffer home to "ask directions," the Younger brothers hid, then followed the lawmen when they rode off.

The Youngers caught Lull, Boyle, and Daniels on the Chalk Level Road about 2:30 p.m. Jim whipped out a brace of six-guns and John leveled a shotgun and forced the stunned "cattle buyers" to disarm themselves. Jim dismounted and began to collect the weapons when Lull suddenly produced a pistol from his hip pocket and pumped a slug into John's throat. John blasted Lull with both barrels of his shotgun, and the detective's horse bolted into the woods. Lull collapsed in the road and died the next day in a nearby house.

Daniels managed to shoot Jim in the thigh, but the Youngers turned their fire on the deputy and gunned him down. John Younger, having triggered his revolver at the mortally wounded Daniels, suddenly tumbled to the ground as Boyle fled to safety. John died within moments. Jim arranged for friends to take care of his dead brother, then left the country. John was buried nearby, but later his remains were transferred to the family plot at Lee's Summit.

Two years later Jim was fearfully wounded in the abortive bank robbery attempt at Northfield, Minnesota. Jim, Cole, and Bob were captured in the ensuing manhunt and sentenced to life in prison. Bob died behind bars, but Jim and Cole were paroled in 1901. With his health in decline and despondent over other problems, Jim committed suicide the following year and was buried in the Lee's Summit family plot.

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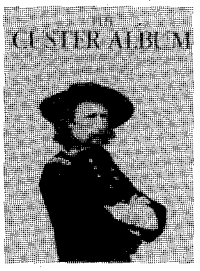

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Trails Grown Dim

Sawtelle

I am related to the Sawtelle family and am looking for any information on their family history. I would like to hear from anyone named Sawtelle or who might be related to the family or have information about them. I would appreciate any help.—**Ben Tayler, 401 West Sycamore, Greensboro, North Carolina 27402.**

Davis

I am looking for any information about my great-grandfather, Benjamin Franklin Davis, and any of his ancestors or descendants. Census records show he was born about 1835 in Tennessee. He may have also lived in Missouri.

He married Letecia (Letishia) Victoria Adeline Noble in the mid-1850s in Arkansas or Missouri. He lived in Craighead County, Arkansas, and served during the Civil War in Company E of the Thirteenth Regiment.

Letecia's widow's pension application, filed and approved in 1901, states that Benjamin died October 25, 1875. C. W. Gaskin and D. M. Cannimore signed the "proof of service" form, stating that they knew him for thirty-nine years. They were still living in 1901. I would also like to know who they were and where they came from, if possible. I will share any information I have with others. Thanks!—**Doris Gyarmati, 622 South Street, Mishawaka, Indiana 46544.**

Garrett

I am looking for information about Thomas Garrett, born in May 1860, in Leon County, Texas. His mother and father were Osburn P. Garrett, born in 1834, Mary Head Garrett, born in 1839. Thomas's wife's name is unknown but he had three children, Osburn Cologne, born in October, 1885; John William, born January 31, 1887; and Ellie (or Ella) Garrett Dobbs Wilson, born in September 1889.

Thomas Garrett had an uncle, William Garrett, born in Mississippi in 1846, and an aunt, Malissa Garrett, also born in Mississippi, in 1848. Thomas

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may have lived in southern Oklahoma or northern Texas between 1885 and 1900. I would appreciate any information about his family or descendants.—**Betty Garrett, 1517 Cherry Street, Gainesville, Texas 76240.**

Creason

I am seeking information on James Creason, who arrived in America about 1776 with his brother, Walter Creason. I don't know where he landed. It is said he was from Scotland.

He either brought his wife, Rachel, with him or married her shortly after his arrival. They had nine sons, Peter, James, Isaac, William, Owen, Jacob, Gilbert, Elijah, and Willis, all born in Kentucky. Willis was my great-great-grandfather and was born January 21, 1800, in Madison County. Around 1810 the entire family moved to Missouri. I would appreciate any help.—**Mary Ann Creason Rohde, 5797 Sycamore, Rialto, California 92376.**

Hutchinson

I am looking for information on the Hutchinson family. In 1790 Samuel Hutchinson, a Jesuit priest, sailed to Prince Edward Island, Canada, from Glasgow, Scotland. Another priest, Angus MacEachern, accompanied him and later became the first Catholic bishop of Prince Edward Island.

Elizabeth Wilder was also on the voyage, sailing for Prince Edward Island to work as a governess for the island's first governor. She and Samuel and married in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. They had five children. Samuel later died after an encounter with a bear and Elizabeth took the family back to England.

Later, one of their sons, James, was returning to Canada when a "press gang" captured him. It is thought he fought in the War of 1812. After the war he settled in Illinois. It is said that he became a wealthy wheat farmer.

An aunt, told me she had talked to people in Hutchinson, Kansas, who said they were related to Samuel. I would appreciate hearing from anyone who knows if there is any connection among Samuel Hutchinson and his descendants and the town Hutchinson, Kansas. I would also appreciate hearing from anyone who knows how Hutchinson, Kansas, got its name.—**R. E. Hutchinson, Box 217, Breton, Alberta, Canada T0C 0P0.**

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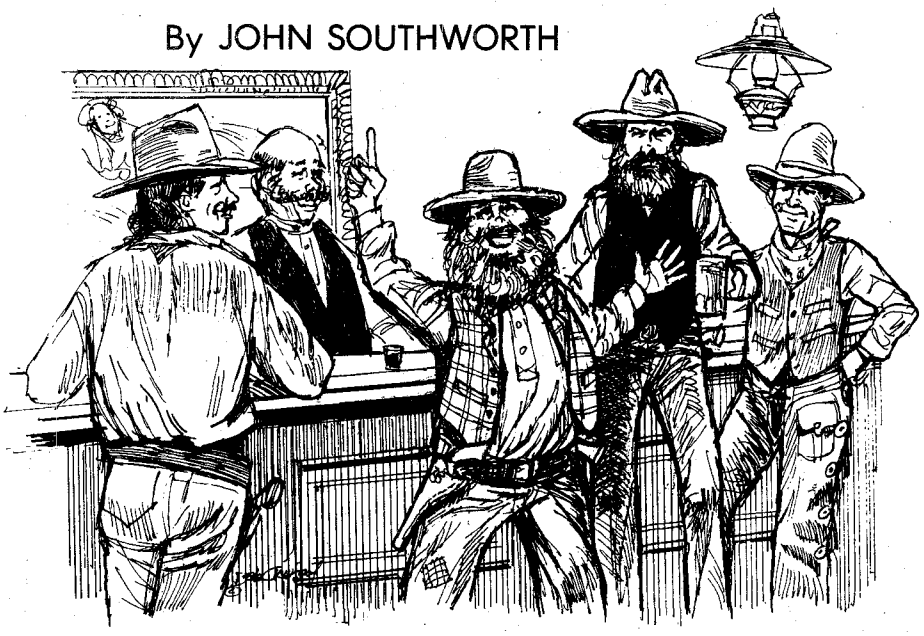
An Unlikely Pair of O

By JOHN SOUTHWORTH



Illustrations by DALE CRAWFORD

For several days people in the local saloons tried to get a whole story out of the two, but soon the truth behind the rise and fall of the Indian uprising no longer interested anyone.

The year was 1875 and all thousand or so citizens of the new town of Panamint were anxiously awaiting the first shipment of silver bullion from the recently completed Surprise Valley Mill and Smelter complex. According to optimistic experts of the time, Panamint would soon rival the booming Comstock which at that very moment was flooding world markets with newly-mined silver.

Two men among those assembled displayed an almost proprietary interest in the community excitement. An odd couple blessed with endless chutzpah, they were road agents planning a major heist. They firmly believed that Panamint was staging the entire mining operation for their own personal benefit.

John Small and John McDonald were already well known in town, having robbed the bank twice, and now they approached the smelter manager and openly inquired as to the timing of the first bullion shipment. Then they asked Senator Bill Stewart, part owner of the whole operation, the same question. Truly, the two were an unbelievable pair of robbers.

Everyone in town knew that Wells Fargo, the acknowledged experts for the safe movement of rich bullion shipments throughout the West, had repeatedly refused to transport Panamint riches through its awesome canyon approaches and across lonesome miles of desert to the relative safety of civilization. The canyon was the greatest hazard, so steep that freighters, who had to use seemingly endless strings of mules coming up the grade, loosely tied all but a single team to the rear of the wagon going down. Two animals in front could easily steer the wagon and in case of brake failure would have some chance of outrunning the load.

Then, too, the spillway canyon was dark, deep, narrow, and crooked, and in several places was barely wide enough for a wagon. For a mile or more a wagon driver could almost touch the nearly vertical rock walls on one or both sides.

The thought of a rich shipment through an indefensible canyon intrigued Small and McDonald. The two planned long and well. Naturally, and logically, freighters would haul that first shipment of Panamint bullion through the steep bottleneck of Surprise Canyon at night, presumably with a well-armed escort. The two carefully selected the time and place for the ambush, took their lonesome positions, and waited.

The expected caravan did not materialize that night. Morning came, then noon. Finally a heavily loaded freight wagon driven by an unarmed man known locally for his imperturbability rode into their trap.

Although the conversation has been lost to time, it probably went something like this:

"Halt, and up with your hands," called one of the robbers.

"Hi, boys. I was told to expect you two about here," said the driver. "The boss said to give you this grub. He knew you would be hungry after waiting all night."

"Yeah, thanks, but where's the silver?"

"There in the back. Take your pick."

Small and McDonald, not believing their good luck, checked the bed of the wagon and found over a ton of lead-silver ingots cast into five solid chunks, each weighing close to 500 pounds.

There was little the would-be robbers could do but curse. They could take the whole load, wagon and all, but to what end? Where could they go with a heavy, mule-drawn wagon, even with a good head start? Anyhow, it was just not their style. All they really wanted was a few lightweight, portable ingots of silver, enough to tide them over for a few months.

The disgusted men stalked back to town to tell their story and have more than a few drinks at Dave Neagle's Oriental Saloon, hopefully compliments of many sympathetic listeners. Only in Panamint, so far from the law, could men take such freedoms. Actually, town citizens considered the two more as local Robin Hoods than despised badmen. The town well remembered the occasion of the "Indian uprising," sometimes called "The Battle of the Stone Corral."

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utlaws

On that occasion one of the local Panamint Indians had stopped at the robbers' cabin above the town and demanded food. Response being slow, the native threatened reprisals. Small and McDonald ran him off with intentionally misaimed shots. Growling and complaining, the Panamint returned to his own people, expanded the tale, and sought help in wiping out the offending white men. The town heard about the threat and armed for an Indian uprising.

Small and McDonald took personal responsibility for the entire incident and promised to clear it up in their own inimitable way. They disappeared for several days into the high mountains, then returned to declare that the town was safe, due entirely to their own selfless efforts. The grateful citizens of Panamint relaxed and a memorable celebration broke out. For several days people in the local saloons tried to get a whole story out of the two, but soon the real truth behind the rise and fall of the Indian uprising no longer interested anyone. Whatever happened, Small and McDonald were civic heroes. A robbed bank or threatened bullion shipment seemed none too high a price to pay for such professional protection.

John Small and John McDonald came separately from New York City where the law did not appreciate their talents for getting into mischief. Both went west to avoid what they considered totally unwarranted restraints on their natural interests and capabilities.

In the Midwest the two unleashed their talents on an unsuspecting public. Somewhere in their nefarious wanderings they met and joined forces. Small and McDonald specialized in robbing banks and holding up stages but always with restraint and decorum. By curbing their greed and only taking a few tens or hundreds of dollars, they never suffered the full fury of the law. Small and McDonald even worked as hired hands now and then when they felt the need to settle down, perhaps to let things cool off a bit.

They kept moving, though, always west, until they heard of a new boom town called Panamint high up in the

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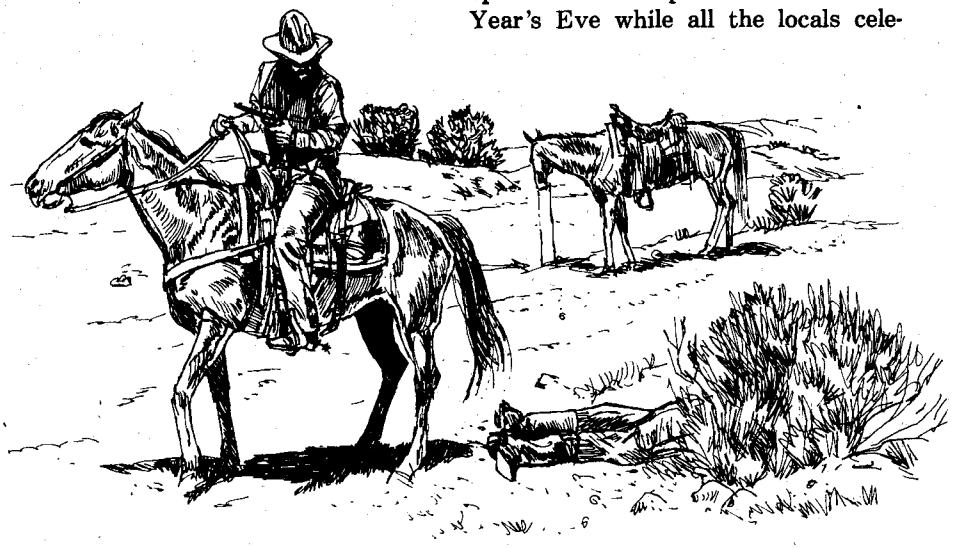
mountains of California close to the Nevada border. Such a place would be a long way from the law and give them many opportunities to practice their chosen trade.

Small and McDonald got the necessary grubstake to move by robbing a stage. In Austin they stole a couple of horses and rode on to their ultimate destiny. Only in Panamint could such a pair be accepted and warmly remembered.



Far from Panamint and any semblance of civilization, the men came to a permanent parting of ways when they argued over some unimportant point.

Small and McDonald built a little cabin in a steep and lonely gulch far outside the new town. There they raised some of their own food and usually minded their own business. They also staked a mining claim which turned out to be quite rich, though the two had no intention of ever working it themselves. They were always good for a handout, even a grubstake, using money conveniently "borrowed" from someone else. If times got too tough, they could and would rob local banks. It got so bank tellers expected them now and then and handed over a few gold coins rather than risk gunfire. It was surprising how little gold it took to maintain the peace.

Local people easily recognized Small and McDonald. Uncouth, unkempt, and heavily bearded, each habitually carried two guns low on the hips, handles down and well forward. John Small was short, wide, and thick, almost square. He was verbose and did most of the talking. John McDonald was tall and thin, a man of few words but a man of decision. After Small got through expressing his long-winded opinions, McDonald would voice the final word and the two would go into action.

One writer caught the essence of their character when he called them "Knights of the Brass Rail" for all the money and time they spent in saloons. It was usually late at night, after many drinks, that Small and McDonald developed plans for their memorable escapades.

A scheme to drive Chinese laborers from their camp at the lower end of town on a bitterly cold New Year's morning is one such plan. They developed this mean-spirited idea on New Year's Eve while all the locals celebrated in the many saloons of Panamint. Conversations about the Chinese who built a road through the precipitous gorge into town grew heated. With the work complete, townspeople feared the now idle road-builders might compete for mining jobs.

It was a perfect set-up for Small and McDonald. Assuring the rowdy crowd that this was their kind of work, the two knights staggered down the road and shot up the brush and stone hovels of the sleeping Chinese. The workers fled into the freezing night with little chance of safe passage anywhere.

Later Clodoveo Chavez and twenty or so well-armed, experienced murderers rode in the direction of Panamint, all vowing revenge for the recent hanging of their leader, Tiburcio Vasquez. Chavez inherited the band of cutthroats when Californians apprehended Vasquez and hanged him in San Jose in March 1875 for a two-year crime and murder spree in that area. Chavez had been Vasquez' lieutenant and after the hanging he took the outlaw band and headed east. They traveled slowly, raiding homesteads, waystations, stage-

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coaches, and lone travelers. News of their progress panicked Panamint.

Small and McDonald again came to the rescue, two experienced gunmen ready to stand off a small army. They knew all the best places to stage a successful ambush in the serpentine lower approach to the town and, with the heartfelt blessing of the community, went downgrade to defend Panamint. Meanwhile the local citizens waited apprehensively.

Late that same night, the good citizens of Panamint assailed the driver of the inbound stage and his passengers with questions. Did they have any trouble getting through the canyon? Did they see the gunfight there? Was Chavez still coming?

The driver and his two passengers were livid. They knew nothing of Chavez or any fight in the canyon but they did know they had been robbed of all their ready cash by none other than those two upstanding Panamint citizens, Small and McDonald.

Chavez' band never came close to Panamint, and its citizens welcomed back their errant guardians. For a second time townspeople felt indebted to the pair and thought that the score was about even as the two wayward saviors surely deserved some remuneration for their willingness to defend the city. Only the stage driver and his two passengers thought otherwise.

Panamint was dying by the end of 1876 and Small and McDonald needed a stake to leave town. The Harris and Rhine mercantile firm, where the men often made purchases, was tightening its belt and about to close, so Small and McDonald held up their good friends, emptied the safe of some $2,300, and went down the canyon for the last time. The theft put Harris and Rhine out of business forever.

There is no record of either Small or McDonald spending any time behind bars. Lawmen apparently considered their crimes to be minor infractions. County sheriffs were busy enough without chasing far out into the desert after such charismatic desperados who had the support of a whole town.

In the end their charm and charisma could not protect them. Far from Panamint and any semblance of civilization, the men came to a permanent parting of ways when they argued over some unimportant point. John Small was not quite as fast with his gun as John McDonald. Without his talkative partner, McDonald quickly disappeared from further report.

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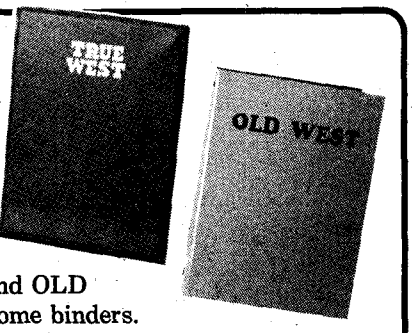

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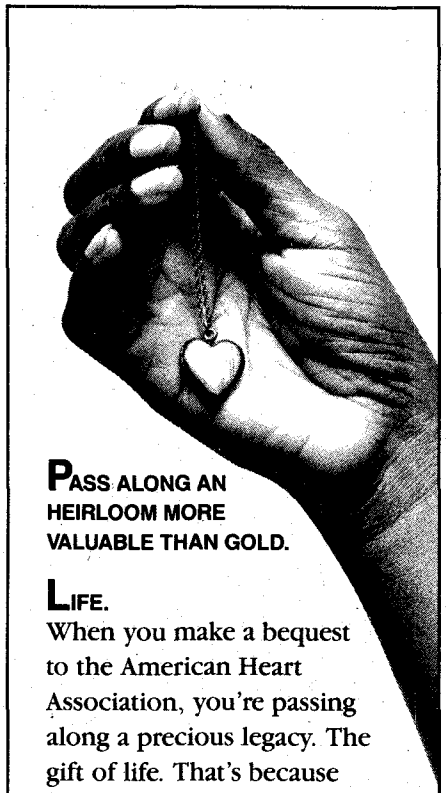

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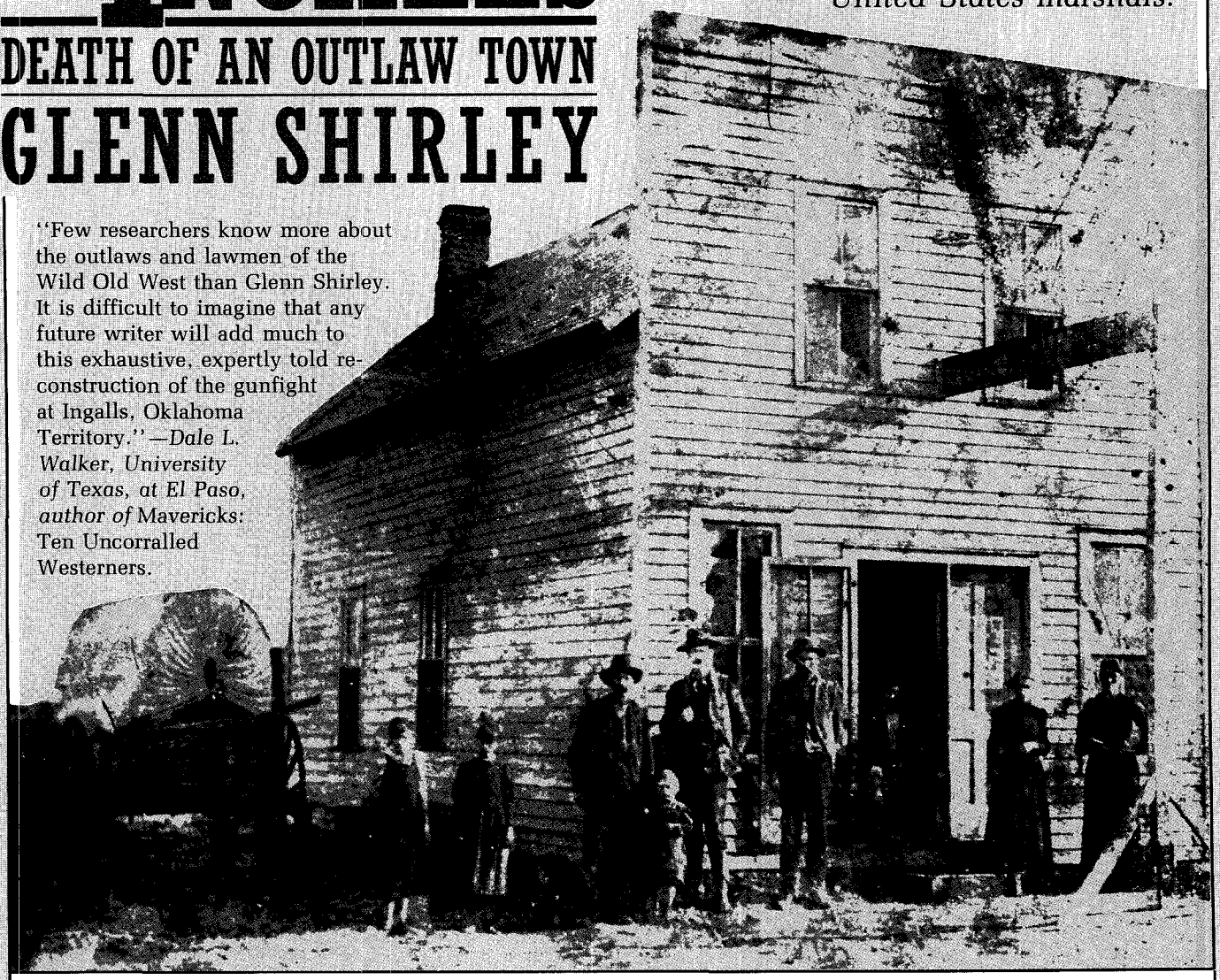

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